





ESSAYS FROM "GOOD WORDS"

BY HENRY ROGERS

AUTHOR OF "THE ECLIPSE OF FAITH"



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P R E F A C E.

ALL the following Essays, except the last, were written for *Good Words*. As five other Essays, contributed to the same periodical, have been already published in the volume containing the new edition of "Reason and Faith," the present volume has been made uniform with it in type and appearance.

Critics have of late sometimes complained of the frequency of reprints from periodical literature; and perhaps not unreasonably. Yet surely, it is a venial offence, for if any be injured, it must be the publishers and authors alone. The public, if it does not like "the wares," need not, and will not, purchase them; and knowing beforehand what they are, will not be liable to be taken in by its own false preconceptions, or a pretentious advertisement.

It is not for me to say whether the following Essays be intrinsically worthy of a separate republication.

The subjects indeed are, for the most part, of great importance and enduring interest. Of the mode of treatment the reader must judge. But it is only just to myself to say that the whole of the Essays have been very carefully revised, many additions and alterations made, and no inconsiderable portions almost rewritten.

One reason among others which has induced me to issue them in the present form, is, that I have been told by some of my coevals, whose eyes, like mine, are getting dim, that they would be glad to read them in a larger type.

The last Essay, on M. Renan's "Les Apôtres,"—which I was desirous to include in this volume, as the former contained one on his "Vie de Jésus,"—was written for the *Fortnightly Review* at the request of the accomplished editor, Mr. Lewes, and is here reprinted by the courtesy of the proprietors.

I was in doubt whether it would be possible for me to prepare such an article as he would deem admissible ; but I told him that if I were permitted to write just as freely as I should for the *Edinburgh* or any other periodical, I could have no objection. Mr. Lewes frankly replied that it was his wish that I should do so ; that it was his earnest desire to get men of widely different views, especially on important points of theology and philosophy, to argue them in the *Fortnightly Review* as on neutral ground ; where the

pro and *con* might be fairly and candidly exhibited, and (as might be presumed) with somewhat of the temper and courtesy usually manifested in the personal intercourse of those who are contesting each other's opinions. It is needless to say that Mr. Lewes carried out the "convention" with scrupulous impartiality.

While it would be preposterous to wish that periodicals in general should be conducted on such cosmopolitan principles, I must say I think it would be a good thing if there were *one* such organ in every national literature ;—an organ, the object of which should be, to give temperate expression to antagonistic views, by those best deemed able to expound them. It would be attended with, at least, these advantages :—Since truth is stronger than error, though it might sometimes be placed at a disadvantage, yet, having a fair field, it would on the whole, be a gainer. Those who are in error would have a greater chance, at least, of seeing the truth exhibited, and in forms least likely to repel them. Even for those who are in possession of the truth, it would be well to see an inoffensive exhibition of what can be said against it ; for in this way only can we learn adequately to defend it. It would also teach us to abate our own dogmatism, and to exercise charity towards those who differ from us. Lastly, and above all, writers, feeling that they spoke in the presence of adversaries, would for the most part do so with a candour, calmness, and

moderation, which they are too apt to forget when they are the champions and echoes of their own applauding party.

It would of course be a difficult thing to conduct such a periodical with judicial impartiality ; to offend neither in the tone of advocacy, nor in the proportions of space assigned to this or that subject ; but if these difficulties can be fairly met, I have no doubt such a periodical would be of considerable advantage, not only to literature, but to truth.

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I.

THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR.*

IT is a happy characteristic of our nature, that Hope is stronger than Fear ; and rarely do we see a more striking or comprehensive proof of this than in that unanimity of pleasant auguries, “the nods and becks and wreathed smiles,” the universal shaking of hands and mutual felicitations, with which almost all nations in all ages have agreed to usher the New Year in. Every one seems astrologer enough to cast the horoscope of the young stranger, and to pronounce that the planetary aspects are benign ; every one is his own soothsayer, and the omens are always favourable !

And yet nothing is darker than the prospect on which Hope gazes with such rapt eyes. It is as if

* Though the “Thoughts” in this Essay are for the most part equally applicable to every “New Year,” an allusion here and there makes it necessary to state that they were originally written for 1865.

travellers, having gained the summit of the Righi in a deep mist, which enveloped alike the fairer and the sterner features in that wondrous scene, should clap their hands, and break out into acclamations, at the beauty of the landscape.

The aspect of the outward world exhibits meanwhile a striking contrast with this universal hilarity. This concert of happy omens takes place when, as one would imagine, it would be least likely. It is the midnight of the year, and all nature mourns in desolation ; and this universal chirrup of hope and joy is as if the song-birds began their carol in the depth of winter ; as if the cuckoo's note were heard in the leafless woods ; as if the gay butterfly fluttered and the cricket chirped amidst the dry ferns of the last autumn.

Everything without, seems to remind us rather of ruin and decay, blasted hopes and dreary prospects, than of coming joy and gladness. More natural would our gratulations seem if we began the year still, as our forefathers once did, at the vernal equinox, when the bud is bursting and the young grass is springing, and Mother Earth is recovering from her long winter's trance ; or if we celebrated the New Year's festival, as did the Jews, in the month Nisan, when the jocund sun and the green earth were painting all nature in harmonious colouring with the vivid imagery of man's hopes, or typifying his various combinations of hope and fear by the alternate lights and shadows, the

blending tears and smiles, of a changeful April day. But as it is, the wind sighs mournfully through the leafless trees, telling of man's too speedy decay, or the snow wraps all nature in that shroud which seems the emblem of his winding-sheet : and yet from out all his habitations goes forth the cry of gladness : from each reeling steeple come the merry chimes of bells ; and every face smiles as every lip utters the words, "A Happy New Year." Doubtless it is a strong proof of what we began with, that "hope springs immortal in the human breast : " else as in other cases, nature's face would have waked a responsive and sympathetic echo in the bosom of her chosen child ; even as the vernal or the autumnal day surprises him, with silent force, into spontaneous mirth or involuntary sadness.

Again ; what is all too actual in the present and too certain in the future, would, one would think, qualify in some degree the exuberant buoyancy of the hour. Not only is it certain that during the very last moments of the Old Year, and the very first of the New, was the great reaper Death gathering his sheaves just as usual ; not only is it true that on the morning of this great holiday there lies in almost every street one or more of whom we sadly say that they count by years no longer, and on whose eyes has broken "another morn than ours ;" not only does it dawn upon multitudes to whom the first day of this new

year will also be their last ; not only must it open upon thousands more to whom Love, as it draws the curtain, and anxiously gazes at the pale wan face on which Death has set his seal, can hardly say without faltering, “A Happy New Year,”—too well knowing that before the leaves shall open, perhaps before the snowdrop shall peep from under its winter mantle, the “robin redbreast will be chirping upon their grave ;” not only are there thousands more to whom, as the sun of the last year went down in clouds, so the first sun of the new year rises in them, and to whom the mere transition from one epoch to another makes no difference ; not only is all this true, but when we consider further how large a fraction—no less than a fortieth part or so—of those who welcome the new year with gratulation will never see the end of it, or who beginning it in prosperity, which naturally justifies their hopes, will end it in adversity, which will too surely prove the vanity of them ; one would not unreasonably expect that such facts and reflections as these would repress somewhat of that hilarity which is apt to inspire us all at this season.

It cannot be required indeed (for it would not be natural, and would assuredly be ungrateful) that we should put on sackcloth and sit in ashes, or allow our fears to preponderate over our hopes ; nor that we should suspend over the heads of the guests at the convivial meetings which celebrate this annual festival

the sword of Damocles,—for that would take away the appetite altogether ; but in imagination, methinks, we might do well to provide ourselves with some such device as that of the wise Saladin, and teach ourselves to “Remember that we are mortal !” Standing on this isthmus of time between the two eternities, we should temper our hopes with our fears, and allow a sober wisdom, derived from the lessons of the past, to shade the brightness of the fair illusions in which we are apt to array the unknown future.

Yet no sooner is the knell of the Old Year tolled at the last stroke of midnight, than the merry chimes ring out the birth of his glad successor. It is as when other monarchs die : “The King is dead—long live the King !” and all mankind (true courtiers in this case) hasten to “salute the rising sun.” The dead monarch, whatever his claims to remembrance or the benefits of his reign, is forgotten as soon as he is gathered to the sepulchre of his fathers ; and the loyal flatterers begin, as usual, the work of adulation.

The image which leads us to toll the knell of the Old Year, and greet with merry chimes the New, is, of course, a very obvious one ; the Old Year is no doubt in one sense dead and buried ; the New is just born, and is, and will be for 365 days and a little more, a living reality. Yet as everything may be taken by two handles (or, for that matter, by a thousand), there would be almost as much propriety if

these symbols were, not inverted perhaps, but greatly changed.

Herodotus tells a story of the Trausians, a tribe of Thracians, who were so far from rejoicing when a “man child was born into the world,” that its kith and kin—including the disconsolate parents, the authors of this new mischief—gathered in a circle round the forlorn object, and howled out their lamentations on the hapless condition of the young pilgrim of life, under the vivid sense of all the ills he was heir to in coming into this bleak world ; while, for similar reasons, they celebrated the obsequies of a departed friend with rejoicings and triumph, as having escaped them. They tolled man into life, and rang a merry peal at his death ! Whether they learned these singular notions and equally singular customs from the miseries of their own barbarous condition, or from profoundly moralizing on the condition of human life—in other words, whether they were more savages or philosophers in this matter—may be doubted. We must, at any rate, confess that in these, and in some other traits of their character (if it be truly delineated by the shrewd old annalist), they were very original savages ; though it must also be confessed that *their* grim “Welcome, little stranger,” was by no means so true to nature, nor, therefore, to philosophy, as that fond wish expressed in the exquisite Hindoo epigram :

“Naked on parent’s knees, a new-born child
Thou satt’st and wept, while all around thee smiled ;
So live, that sinking to thy last long sleep,
Thou then may’st smile, while all around thee weep :”

when *that* wish is fulfilled, Solomon’s paradox becomes true, “That the day of a man’s death is better than the day of his birth ;” and Paul’s, that however good to be here, it is “far better to depart.”

But though we could not, like the Trausians, celebrate the obsequies of the Old Year with a merry peal, yet is it not too significant to toll its funeral knell, as if it were to be buried, cut off from all communication with us, and be henceforth nothing to us? Would it not be as wise to bid it farewell, as a friend departing from our shores,—not dead in truth, nay, *never* to die to us,—with a strain of pensive and solemn music? And if we cannot for very shame imitate those savages of Herodotus, and meet the New Year with lamentations, yet might we not with propriety welcome it in strains which should intermingle the sense of awe and mystery with the aspirations of hope and joy, as an orchestra attunes the minds of an audience to the unknown scenes of wonder which the rising curtain is to unveil?

The past, in truth, still lives to us, and, connected by the slight ligament of the present moment, is all that really does. The future does not live as yet. The past is the region, properly speaking, of *fact*,—

pleasing or painful, of aspect benign or frowning, chiefly as we ourselves have made it ; over it, imagination has little power. As to the future, we live only in imagination,—“that forward delusive faculty,” as Butler calls it, “ever obtruding beyond its sphere,”—and the counterpart of that future it paints will never live in reality : it is, in truth, as much a land of shadows as any other in the realms of this great Enchanter. And even if we prefer to gaze on the unknown future rather than on the familiar past ; if its very mask piques our curiosity, and leads us to speculate on what is behind it, it may yet be naturally expected that we should not be absolutely engrossed by it ; that, courteously greeting the New Year, as a stranger, of whom we at present know nothing, we should dwell with pensive and grateful retrospect on the many blessings the Old Year has brought us, if we have been happy in it ; or, if we have had our trials and sorrows, that we have been brought safely through them, and that at least so much of the more toilsome, hazardous parts of life’s pilgrimage will have to be traced no more ; or if we have fallen into grievous errors, that we should take that appropriate moment for penitently confessing them, thanking God that they have not been our ruin, and resolving to walk more warily for the time to come : in a word, that we should let the present be the meeting-place of the past and the future, and allow the lessons of severe

experience taught us by the one, to chastise and instruct the anticipations we are too ready to form of the other.

Hope, genuine hope, is not symbolized by that mock sun, that parhelion of fancy, which promises unclouded brightness, but by the rainbow; and the rainbow of hope, like that of the sky, is the offspring alike of sun and shower—of the bright lights and tearful clouds of experience.

Admirable was that emblem of the two-faced Janus, by which the wise old Romans signified the New Year; one face looking back upon the past and the other forward to the future. For it is only as we wisely exercise retrospect, that we can have any power of anticipation: except as that shall enlighten the future, it is all dark, or lighted only by the will-o'-the-wisps of fancy. So that if Janus had not had his face that looked backward, that which looked forward could have been properly represented only as blind. As an old writer observes, he who will not "take the past to guide him in regulating his hopes of the future, so far from having, like Janus, two heads, must rather be counted as having no head at all."

So obviously natural is it, in all who have reached the mature age of reflection, to chequer the gay with the grave on this day, that one cannot be surprised to see how often our "Essayists," when they

have given their readers their New Year's greetings, have fallen rather into a vein of pensive musing than of mirth ; of musing which has caught its tone and hues more from sober retrospect, than from joyous anticipation. Thus in that exquisite paper on "New Year's Eve," Elia says : "The elders, with whom I was brought up, were of a character not likely to let slip the sacred observance of any old institution ; and the ringing out of the Old Year was kept by them with circumstances of peculiar ceremony. In those days the sound of those midnight chimes, though it seemed to raise hilarity in all around me, never failed to bring a train of pensive imagery into my fancy. Yet I then scarce conceived what it meant, or thought of it as a reckoning that concerned me. Not childhood alone, but the young man till thirty, never feels practically that he is mortal. He knows it, indeed, and if need were, he could preach a homily on the fragility of life ; but he brings it not home to himself, any more than in a hot June we can appropriate to our imagination the freezing days of December. But now, shall I confess a truth ? I feel these audits but too powerfully ; I begin to count the probabilities of my duration, and to grudge at the expenditure of moments and shortest periods, like miser's farthings."

And even the "Lounger," anticipating the image of Charles Lamb, says on a similar occasion : "As men advance in life, the great divisions of time may

indeed furnish matter for serious reflection ; as he who counts the money he has spent, naturally thinks of how much smaller a sum he has left behind."

We often bewail our ignorance of the future, on which our experience of the past sheds so feeble a light ; yet it is no paradox to affirm, that that ignorance is the only safe condition on which we can encounter it. It is the source of the hopes with which we anticipate it, and ought to suggest the wary wisdom with which we should enter upon it. If man could, by consulting some magic mirror of the old adepts, or some transcendental science as yet unborn, exactly foreknow the events of all his future life, and the mode and time of his death ; if he could see in unerring vision the last cast of the sexton's office, and hear by anticipation the shovelful of dust rattle on his coffin, would the oracle of the all-knowing Sidrophel be thronged with applicants ? I fancy not ; at least not to ascertain their own destiny, however curious they might be to know the history of their neighbours. If, on the other hand, they flocked to the oracle only to know *that*, the world would soon wish to relapse into ignorance with all convenient speed ; and in any case, I imagine, the chief charm of existence would be lost to us. Men would find, like our first parents, that they had bought knowledge at too costly a price, and that ignorance in Paradise was better than science

outside of it. Whereas hope is now stronger than fear, then, not only would fear be stronger than hope, but hope would be quenched, and the chief stimulus of life quenched with it. Hope would be extinguished, but so would not fear; and the soul would sink into utter apathy, were it not—hard alternative!—that the dread of foreseen evil would keep it only too sensitive, while it would poison all the pleasure of the foreseen good. As it is, whether in adverse or prosperous circumstances, this ignorance (if we have learned the lessons of past experience aright) may minister to us the hope which is our solace in the one condition, and that distrust and caution which should accompany the other.

Do we enter on the year in gloom and sadness, to which the external aspect of nature is only too responsive? Do we walk in the gay procession of this crowded holiday with the air of mutes at a funeral? Are we unable to reply to the universal salutation of "A happy New Year," except with the looks of an undertaker? or do we attempt to reciprocate it in mumping tones which stick in our throat, and choke us to utter them? Let us recollect how easy it is for Him, in whose hands we believe our life is, to "turn the shadow of death into the morning!" As we cannot tell what "a day may bring forth," how much less a year! As the winter of nature passes away, so may this winter of our sorrow with it: and the

summer sun and the golden harvest find us in a prosperity of which they shall be pleasant emblems. And even should this prove illusion, yet if we have learned those lessons which a wisdom greater than our own would teach us by the discipline of life, then, even though happiness be yet longer delayed than during this little circle of the months, nay, delayed till we shall reckon by months no more, we shall enjoy a sunshine of the soul, however dark the scene without, of which we cannot be robbed, and which will make even this year one of genuine prosperity.

And not less instructively does this ignorance of the future speak to those (though less docile to the teaching than the children of sorrow) who enter on the year in great prosperity. That ignorance rebukes, if anything but experience can, the presumption of anticipating the continuance or the constancy of so fickle a thing. To teach man humility, to "hide pride" from him—a lesson which it is always hard to learn, but which is never so hard as in the days of prosperity—is far too precious an object in God's estimate, not to make it well worth while to enforce it, if need be, at so slight a cost as the ruin of our temporal prosperity; at least, such abatements or fluctuations in it as shall convince us of its instability. Man's tendency, indeed, in all states, is to believe in that law of "continuance," as Bishop Butler says, which suggests that things will be as they are, unless

we have the most palpable proofs to the contrary. But the tendency is never so strong as when it is very *agreeable* to a man to believe that the state of things will be permanent; that he has built an eyrie on the rock, to which the spoiler cannot climb; an "abiding city" where he can take up his rest. A uniform prosperity—more than anything else—tends to engender or foster those dispositions which are inconsistent with either the true knowledge of ourselves, or our due subjection to God. If pride, hardness of heart, contempt of others not so happy as ourselves, or scant sympathy with them, be not the effect, (and they too often are), inordinate love and misestimate of the present, and gradual oblivion of the future, except to presume that it will be *like* the present, take too ready possession of the soul. There are, accordingly, few who can so enjoy long-continued prosperity as not to be sensibly the worse for it. A few may be observed, indeed, of two opposite classes, who enjoy it to the last: the one, those who seem past learning the lessons of adversity, and who are allowed to "spread as a green bay tree;" and the other, those who, being "taught of God," have learned them so well, are so skilled to use the world without abusing it, and so daily mindful by whose donation all blessings are given, and by what tenure of homage to the Supreme Lord they are alone held, that they do not seem in any appreciable degree injured by them.

These, God seems to permit to walk through life in almost unclouded sunshine ; not, indeed, without some trials, yet with few, and none of them what we should call great and signal reverses,—with little experience of the “ups and downs of life,” as people say. But there are few of us who do not need, and who do not get, the lessons which adversity must teach us ; and of the generality it may be said, they are never more in danger than when they have been long prosperous. The ancients well understood the connection between signal prosperity and some coming reverses, though they accounted for the fact which experience taught them, by an erring philosophy. One of the best known and most instructive stories of Herodotus teaches us how deep was the heathens’ conviction of the fact, and how insufficiently heathen speculation reasoned upon it. It was, it seems, the divine “envy,” *φθόνος*, which made the gods grudge the continued or exuberant prosperity of poor mortals ; and Nemesis, therefore, never failed, in due time, to lay the proud structure in the dust, or send the cankerworm to the root of the fair tree. The historian tells us that Amasis, king of Egypt, had a dear friend in Polycrates, prince of Samos ; but the latter was *so* happy, that his friend could not help, in accordance with the theory just mentioned, regarding him as the most miserable of mortals, and plainly marked out for the speedy bolts of the divine Nemesis. Amasis exhorted him

therefore (if so be he might render the gods propitious by making himself miserable, instead of waiting to let them make him still more so), to disarm, by anticipating, their anger; and to essay this by sacrificing the thing he most valued. Polycrates, impressed by the conspicuous wisdom of this advice, and this reasonable view of the divine government, made choice of a costly ring which he highly valued, and cast it into the sea. Strange to say, it was swallowed by a fish; the fish was caught by a fisherman, and was sent as a present to Polycrates, whose cook found in its maw the ring the prince had intended as his *piaculum*, and restored it to its owner; whereupon King Amasis renounced his friendship utterly, as one so fatally prosperous that even what he threw away came back to him; who, therefore, must be predestined to be made an example of terrible reverses; and who, as he could not fail to involve his friends in his ruin, ought to be carefully shunned, as rats run from a falling house. And the event, according to Herodotus, showed the justice of the fears of Amasis, and also his singular discretion!

Far different, happily, are a Christian's views of Him who cannot grudge any of His own gifts, seeing that they are "without repentance," and that from Him all receive "life, and breath, and all things." Nevertheless, long-continued prosperity is in various ways so inconsistent with man's highest good, that

it is as nearly certain that it will have (because it will need) the correctives of adversity, as if, in truth, envy of mortal happiness, and not the desire to endow us at last with something better, were the genuine cause of it.

But most effectually shall we be prepared for the future, if, in implicit reliance upon a wisdom which sees the future for us and has provided for it, we can learn the lessons our Saviour would teach us; and trusting in Him who "feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field," will take no excessive self-vexing care—so the word means—for the morrow. "Take no thought," says our version; and as it now stands, the text is apt to suggest a meaning which it was not originally designed to convey. "Take no thought" did not enjoin absolute thoughtlessness about the morrow, or indifference to what prudence tells us it will probably "bring forth," or indolence in discharging what prudence tells us is our duty in reference to it, but the absence of all excessive, anxious thought. This is the force of the Greek word *μέριμνα*, and our English word "thought," when the version was made, suggested a parallel meaning. The meaning of this word is well illustrated by Archbishop Trench, in his little work on the "Authorised Version of the New Testament," in which he cites some striking passages from our older writers in confirmation of his criticism.

The examples by which our Lord illustrates his maxim, ought to have prevented the hypercriticism to which it has been subjected. It is with regard to what we *cannot* do, not what we can, that he cautions us not to expend any superfluous and unprofitable care, as by “taking thought” to add to our stature (or our life, as others translate the word ἡλικία); parallel to which would be the “taking thought,” in order to act as if we could certainly foresee the future, and tell by anxious excogitation what “the morrow would bring forth.”

Even M. Renan is not insensible to the beauty of these precepts; though, as is his wont through his singular book—full of treacherous praise and laudatory libel, where “the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau,” or rather where the “Hail Master” accompanies the betraying kiss—he finds out that our Saviour may have gone too far, and enunciated maxims which, however proper for his little Galilean flock (living a sort of Arcadian life which M. Renan has invented for them, but to which we find nothing parallel in the Evangelic history), are quite inapplicable to the rest of the world! And yet, if all excessive care about the future be absurd and unprofitable,—if as is too plain it poisons life, and if, as is equally plain, mankind in all ages and nations are but too prone to it,—the maxims have a world-wide application.

And if we act in the spirit of Christ's maxims ; if we have a firm faith in the all-embracing and paternal government of our Heavenly Father ; then, though we know nothing of the future, except that we are ignorant of it ; though we know nothing of the great *public* events with which the coming year is too surely fraught ; though we only know that it opens with the spectacle of one hemisphere in the agonies of the most devastating strife which the world has ever seen,* and Europe probably drifting into gigantic revolutions in the attempt to untie the most complicated knot that ever tried the fingers of diplomacy, or invited the Gordian shears of war to cut it ;† though we know nothing of the sudden events which will bring calamity or absolute destruction, at one fell swoop, to a sufficient number to excite public attention and sympathy, and fill, for a few days, the columns of the newspapers ; though we know only that it will bring its usual complement of so-called casualties, and which are truly so to us—which, like the Sheffield inundation, or the Erith explosion, or the Calcutta hurricane of the past year, will fall we know not where or when ; though we know nothing of the possible droughts or inundations, wrecks or pestilence, fires or floods, commer-

* The American War.

† The Schleswig-Holstein question, then (November, 1864) in its last phases before the war, which has had such tremendous results for Europe.

cial embarrassments or manufacturing distress, which may strew the course of the year with havoc ; though we are still less able to guess at the casualties which will befall individuals ; in how many forms sickness, or death, or penury lie in wait for us ; from what ambush the shaft may come which is to smite us to the dust, or those whom we love ; or from what spark the fire shall be kindled which is to set the crumbling structure of our earthly happiness in a blaze ;—yet if we firmly believe that “all things shall work together for good to them who love God,” resign ourselves with an unfaltering faith to His government, and comply with His method of discipline, we may each add, as the apostle did, in a more certain foresight of coming evils than we can have, “None of these things move me.”

For in that case enough is known of the certain issues, though nothing be known of the events, of the year, to inspire us, not indeed with thoughtless mirth, yet with well-founded hope and sober joy. The retrospect of the past ought to confirm the same truth, for it not only teaches gratitude for the many blessings enjoyed, or still possessed ; but gives us a guarantee for the future, and may assure us that if we but act our part with faith, courage, and fortitude, “Goodness and Mercy,” as they have “followed us all the days of our life,” will accompany us “even unto the end.” And thus, to that inscrutable future,

veiled as it is to us, we may with utmost confidence commit ourselves. In all the circuitous tracks through the unknown desert, the “pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night,” will not fail to make a path for us; there is nothing that can possibly happen to us, which the subtle alchemy of Divine Love, able to bring light out of darkness, and joy out of sorrow, cannot turn into profit or instruction—into correctives of our follies, or corroboratives of our virtue.

But let the uncertainties of the year be what they may, *one* thing at least is certain;—that though we cannot control, or even foresee, the events which may fill us with rapture or rack us with anguish, before the first day of a New Year shall come round again, we may, if we please, absolutely determine its character to *us*, in the only sense in which it is important that it should be determined; or in which it, or any similar portion of time, is or can be of any significance to us at all: that is, by accepting the events, whatever they be, that may befall us, in the plenary belief that they are the dispensations of supreme Wisdom and Love, and in the spirit of resignation and submission to the Divine Will; looking sharply all the while to detect the lessons which they are severally designed and adapted to teach us, and endeavouring to apply them; to find out what are the weak points of character which

require strengthening, and what the “easily besetting infirmities” which require correcting: and thus by conscious effort (not as too often by involuntary, perhaps sullen, acquiescence) becoming “workers together” with the designs of God. Thus possessing our souls in patience, striving to turn the external events of life into the instruments of self-discipline, and considering this scene of our existence as but a means to an end, then, however joyless the scene without, nay, even though the whole year should be like its first day to us—be born, and live, and die in mid-winter—there will be perpetual summer within. However fluctuating and unstable may be the element by which the bark which carries our earthly fortunes is tossed, it will but roll us onward towards the eternal haven. However crumbling the edifices which our eager hopes and feeble hands may build, the solid fabric of the “eternal building” shall be joyfully going on;—that *character*, on which immortality is to be impressed, and which shall endure, not by precarious outward supports of immunity from trial or temptation, but by the equilibrium of internal forces; secure in any world, and capable of the unsinching enjoyment of the best; that *character*, which when annealed by discipline and trial will, for that very reason, be taken to a world where they will be no longer needed; where virtue, become proof against temptation, shall be liberated from it

for ever; and, confirmed in all goodness, may be safely trusted with its own felicity: for “the scaffolds may well be taken down,” as John Howe says, “when the eternal building is finished.”

And if this be the issue, the time will come when the events of the year, or of any year, (however momentous they may now seem to us), will seem, except so far as they have a bearing on *that*, “less than the dust of the balance.” And in this light, apparently, the great Ruler regards all such events *now*: giving us, in our course of moral probation, as the wise physician gives his patient, cordials or anodynes, when they may be needed, but not sparing to cut deep or use the actual cautery, if the life depend on it.

One of the most striking portions of the “Analogy” is the fifth Chapter of the first Part, where Butler so well applies the familiar fact, that each successive stage of life not only prepares the way for the next, but seems mainly designed for that purpose. I have often thought he might have gone further, and thus derived some striking additional confirmations of the conclusion of his first chapter respecting a “Future Life.” For not only is each successive stage *preparatory* to the next, but seems in many respects so purely provisional, that a great part of us—not of our material merely, but our immaterial structure—appears to perish, and slough away (so to speak) when the end

is attained ; as though it had no other purpose than that of a temporary apparatus for developing a future stage of our life. Thus there seems a constant tendency, up to the very end of life, to drop some part of the provisional man ; to deposit some of the very elements of our being. Our sensations grow less vivid, long before our bodily powers in general decay. Our *passive* emotions, as Butler remarks, constantly *weaken* by repetition, as if they were designed only as a *nucleus* on which the *practical* habits, which *strengthen* by that same repetition, might crystallise. Our appetites in like manner, if only indulged (as nature designed) in moderation, grow less eager and exorbitant, and at length almost vanish ; while the higher faculties then, and then only, reach their full vigour when these have passed it,—often leaving the man in the happy condition of the aged Cephalus in Plato's Republic, who declares exemption from the torments of appetite and passion, a full compensation for the loss of their pleasures. Nor is it any answer to say that these decay only as the body decays, for this is but to acknowledge the fact in question ; nor is it always true, for they often give way before loftier and more energetic passions, and are absorbed by them—more especially by the nobler forms of ambition. The pleasures, sports, and pastimes of childhood, though necessary to develop the boy into the man, and rapturously enjoyed without at all thinking

of their ulterior end, all seem so strange to the youth of one-and-twenty, that he wonders at the intensity of feeling they once awakened. The man of middle life in a similar manner wonders at the shadows which he chased so eagerly in his youth ; and though, like the “childish things” he has “long put away,” they have done their work upon him, left indelible traces, for good or evil, on his mental history, and, if he has been virtuous, have happily developed *habits* never destined to perish, he, himself, can hardly help blushing at the escapades of folly into which imagination sometimes led him in the heyday of passion ; is ashamed to look at the love-letters he wrote, and regards them much as the freaks of Orlando Innamorato, or his imitator, Don Quixote, when they engraved on the trees of the forest the names and perfections of their mistresses ! Thus, not only is each stage of life a preparation for the next, but in each some part of the machinery of our nature is dispensed with and thrown aside, or reappears under totally altered conditions. It is seen to be temporary, like the system of circulation provided for the unborn infant, or the envelope that protects the bud, or the case which incloses the chrysalis. Are all these transformations—far more wonderful than that which changes the aurelia into the winged butterfly—for nothing ? Rather, may we not conclude, that if man has conscientiously adapted himself to the successive conditions of his moral growth and

discipline, his nature, defecated from the last traces of this in many respects infantile and provisional state, and retaining only what was designed to be imperishable, shall be endowed with new and higher faculties, be equipped with new vehicles for their exercise, and rejoice in the manhood as well as the "liberty" of the "children of God?" May we not conclude that these successive abscissions from the original elements of our nature are but like the chips of marble which lie at the sculptor's feet when he is giving the last touches to some immortal statue? Though to a novice in the art, his chisel may seem to cut away portions of the very statue itself, it is at last seen that it was but to develop more perfectly the beauty of his ideal.

For those who resolve to pass the coming year in the way certain to determine its complexion as they would at last really have it, and make it a pleasant retrospect, it might be well to write a diary *beforehand*: a diary not of how they have spent the days that are past, but of how they intend to spend at least a goodly portion of the days that are to come; to mark off some auspicious "red-letter days" in their calendar on which some noble purposes shall be fulfilled, or which some signal acts of charity, or benevolence, or self-sacrifice shall make for ever memorable. The diaries which record the past for the avowed purpose of *self-improvement* are seldom of much use. They

consist of doleful entries of opportunities lost, and long lamentations that more was not made of them ; while the real feelings are seldom put down with unsophisticated honesty. Vices and faults are never faithfully registered. We never find in a diary a frank avowal : —“ This day I told a falsehood ; this day I got drunk ; this day I cheated a customer ; this day I pocketed or gave a bribe ; this day I slandered a neighbour ; this day I took a cowardly revenge.” The very confessions are all of failings such as “ lean to virtue’s side.” Diaries, in short, are often nothing better than huge scholia of egotism or paraphrases of hypocrisy. But a diary inscribed beforehand with things to be done, which deliberate judgment and noble feeling approved, and with a firm resolution that they shall be done, would, even if resolution failed, prove, though a mournful, yet a very profitable study at the year’s end ; and if it had been kept, more pleasant than a novel and more instructive than a sermon. And if we all made our first entry something of this kind : “ Resolved on waking on New Year’s Day to scour out of my heart, and as far as possible from my memory, all unkindness, anger, and malice which the last year left there, and that I will not rise from my knees till I can, without cursing myself by implication, repeat the sixth clause of the Lord’s Prayer, ‘ Forgive me, as I forgive,’ ” I do not think we should have done amiss.

Should it strike the reader that this paper is for the most part more grave than generally befits the “festivity of the season,” he will perhaps excuse it when he recollects that, this year,* New Year’s Day falls on Sunday ; and that it is proper, while welcoming the birthday of this new “child of time,” to give some thoughts to *that* day which is commemorative of events that shall be significant to us when “time shall be no more.”

Men sometimes like, as Fuller says, to have some notable epoch from which to date their reformation. What day can be better than this double celebration ? Yet if the work be not begun to-day, consider, Reader, that writer’s arguments for beginning it on any. For *that* day, as this quaint old author says, though it be the obscurest in the calendar, shall to us be for ever memorable : “I do discover a fallacy,” says he, “whereby I have long deceived myself, which is this : I have desired to begin my amendment from my birthday, or from the first day of the year, or from some eminent festival, that so my repentance might bear some remarkable date. But when those days were come, I have adjourned my amendment to some other time. Thus, whilst I could not agree with myself when to start, I have almost lost the running of the race. I am resolved thus to befool myself no longer. I see no day like to ‘to-day,’ the instant

time is always the fittest time. . . . Grant, therefore, that 'to-day I may hear Thy voice.'"

To conclude : one warning, one legacy of wisdom, the Old Year would bequeath to us, if he had a voice to utter it, for it is one of the analogies with which the natural world everywhere whispers to us moral wisdom. And if we might for a moment personify the dying year in his last days, we should picture him a little shrivelled old man—shrivelled as one of his grandsire's winter pippins—piping in the shrill treble of extreme age, and uttering an experience strongly resembling that of human life. "Listen to me, mortals !" he might say, with the same emphasis with which the old, wise by experience, say the like to the young, who will never be wise without it : "Listen to me, ye mortals ! for I also am of the race of the ephemerals. I had my sturdy youth, when it seemed that my life would never end ; and I dug, and ploughed, and planted, and enjoyed my jocund prime and my golden summer ; and I decked myself in the garlands of May, and reaped the yellow harvest, and gathered the purple vintage of autumn ; but scarcely had I attained the object of my desires, and secured the plenty for which I laboured, than I found the shadows lengthening, and the days shortening, and my breath growing short with them, and decrepitude coming upon me, and the days at hand of which I said, 'I have no pleasure in them.' I

have laid up riches and know not who shall gather them ; have planted trees whose fruit other years must eat, and stored the vintage of which other years must drink."

II.

NOVEL ANTIQUITIES.

I HAD been reading with much interest some details of the recent proceedings of the Palestine Exploration Society, as well as an account of the learned labours of M. Deutsch on that curious Samaritan Epigraph, (containing the Decalogue), which was found some years ago, stuck topsy-turvy in the minaret of a Turkish mosque. On the same evening I happened to glance (after an interval of many years) into that curious article in Michaelis' "Laws of Moses" (No. LXIX.), in which the author, indulging in what many would call a waking dream (albeit he was by no means given to dreaming), speculates on the probability of our one day finding "the great stones" inscribed with the Law, or portions of it, which Moses commanded the Israelites to set up on Mount Ebal, and which Joshua tells us *were* set up in obedience to that command.

This chance medley of various yet not unconnected

reading, suggested to me a dream, in which the day-dream of Michaelis seemed to be fulfilled ; and which, as perhaps it may not be altogether destitute of instruction and entertainment, I will venture to confide to the reader. But a word or two first on the waking dream of Michaelis. Without entering into the many controversies as to the precise meaning of the injunctions detailed in Deuteronomy,* and without deciding whether it was the whole Law, or part of it, or the Decalogue only, that was to be inscribed upon “those great stones” (though Kennicott and my dream both agree that it was the Decalogue only), suffice it to say that Michaelis supposes the letters to have been cut deep, and then covered as commanded, with a thick coating of lime ; and that having been thus preserved, they may be hereafter discovered. The passage is so curious, that it may be worth while to cite it.

“Let us only figure to ourselves,” says he, “what must have happened to these Memorials amidst the successive devastations of the country in which they were erected. The lime would gradually become irregularly covered with moss and earth ; and now, perhaps, the stones, by the soil increasing around and over them, may resemble a little mound ; and were they accidentally disclosed to our view, and the lime cleared away, all that was inscribed on them 3500

* Chap. xxvii. 1—8.

years ago would at once become visible. Probably, however, this discovery (highly desirable though it would be both to literature and religion), being in the present state of things, and particularly of the Mosaic Law, now so long abrogated, not indispensably necessary, *is reserved for some future age of the world.* What Moses commanded, merely as an act of legislative prudence, and for the sake of his laws, *as laws*, God, who sent him, may have destined to answer likewise another purpose ; and may choose to bring those stones to light at a time when the laws of Moses are no longer of any authority in any community whatever. Thus much is certain, that nowhere in the Bible is any mention made of the discovery of these stones, nor indeed any further notice taken of them than in Joshua viii. 30—35, where their erection is described ; so that we may hope they will yet be one day discovered.”

To me it seemed, as I read this passage, at least as probable, that the author's dream of the discovery of these memorials might be fulfilled, as that they would produce, if discovered, any notable effects upon those who had managed to elude all other evidence of the truth of the Sacred Records. But however that may be, no sooner were my eyes closed in sleep, than, methought, this wonderful discovery had been actually made by the Palestine Exploration Society, on the lower slopes of Mount Ebal, in the course of some

excavations in the neighbourhood of Nablous, the ancient Sichem. The locality corresponded with the directions of Moses as to the erection of these tablets.

At first, indeed, the intelligence came in the enigmatical form which telegrams from the East so often assume ; the message was a good deal like some of those recently transmitted from India, in which one might fancy that a native at the other end of the wire was making experiments whether the telegraph would not convert his broken English into something intelligible by the time it reached us. The message, in fact, set all the wits at work to decipher the meaning, and failing that, furnished them with numberless jests on its absurdity. It ran thus :—"Palestine explorations—great discovery—Mount Babel—Mosaic Dialogues—Laws of Moses and Michael." People asked very naturally what could be the meaning of it ? They wanted to know where "Mount Babel" was. Some answered, it was very evident that *that* at all events should be known to the telegraph, since it spoke its original dialects in all their confusion. With regard to the "Mosaic" again, antiquaries sagely surmised that some curious specimens of Roman tessellation might have been found ; but what "Mosaic Dialogues" could mean no man dared even to conjecture. Others imagined, from the mention of "Moses and Michael," that our *savans* might have found some ancient representation of the quarrel between "Michael and

the Devil," touching "the body of Moses;" and amused themselves with some sarcastic observations on the extravagance of learned enthusiasm, in deeming some trumpery pictorial or sculptured symbols of an old myth, worthy of being trumpeted to the world as a "Great Discovery."

In short, no one had the most distant idea of what was coming; for the modern hieroglyphics of the telegraph can be quite as dark as those of ancient Egypt. They piqued curiosity, however, nearly as much, and there was a good deal of impatience to know what was really meant. Such are the usual conditions under which great discoveries are heralded. First come indistinct mutterings and whispers which excite curiosity, and in part exhaust it, before the truth gets to us.

But after a great deal of *persiflage* occasioned by the unlucky telegram, authentic intelligence at length arrived, and assured us of nothing less than that the memorable discovery, adverted to as *possible* in the above-cited passage from Michaelis, had been actually made; and that the telegram, properly corrected, meant—"Palestine Exploration Expedition—Mount Ebal—great discovery of the Mosaic Decalogue—see Laws of Moses by Michaelis." Letters from the agents of the Society gave an account of the circumstances which had led to the discovery, and again inflamed curiosity and expectation to the utmost.

Millions were in raptures at the intelligence, and seemed to think that scepticism would no longer have a leg to stand upon. They thought with Michaelis that these "Sermons on Stones" would prove a most opportune reinforcement of a decaying faith, and mightily sustain the evidence for the truth and authenticity of the Mosaic records. Even I, in spite of long and deep conviction, that moral evidence is, after all, principally strong or weak as the human mind chooses to make it, and that though the sun may shine ever so clearly, man can always make it day or night just as he pleases, by simply opening or shutting his eyes; in spite, I say, of long and deep conviction, that evidence is adjusted to our state as one of *moral* probation, and will never be found such as to overbear our judgment or compel our assent, or put it beyond the power of ingenious perverseness plausibly to evade it; even I, too, could not help falling into the common delusion. In all cases, men are apt vastly to over-estimate the effect of a novel and seemingly cogent piece of evidence, and to under-estimate the resources of wayward ingenuity in destroying or neutralizing it. They feel as many a suitor in a court of justice, who asks how it is possible for their adversary to "get over" this or that fact of their case? But I soon found (as *he* often does, to his cost) that nothing is more easy, and that "where there is a will there is a way." Almost from the very moment the

discovery was intelligibly announced to us, it was evident that multitudes, in virtue of their general opinions one way or other, had come to a foregone conclusion, and argued for or against the genuineness of the tablets with the utmost zeal. It was in vain that the wise and moderate, whether believers or sceptics, begged these furious partisans to have a little patience. It was in vain they were reminded that some members of the Expedition had expressly promised to bring home portions, or perhaps the whole, of the venerable relics with them. It was of little use; controversy went on; nay, the point was dogmatically settled by thousands who not only had no manner of data whereon to form a judgment, and before it was possible they should have any; but who, if they had had them all, would have been utterly incompetent to estimate them. Various hypotheses were formed to account for the "blind enthusiasm" (so some called it) which had led the explorers astray, or for the impudent cheat (as others said) which they had attempted to practise on the world.

Many declared that sooner than credit anything so extremely absurd, they could readily believe that the learned members of the Society had either been imposed upon, or had become the dupes of their own zealous antiquarianism; that they had either been cheated by others or had cheated themselves: but not a few were disposed to take the extreme

view just hinted at, and said, that sooner than credit the thing, they could believe that the explorers were perpetrating a "pious fraud," and joining in a foul conspiracy in defence of an exploded fable; that if they had found the "Decalogue of Moses," it was not before they wanted it, and that it was to be hoped they would profit by the command which forbids us to "bear false witness." I must do the world the justice, however, to say that these were a minority; it was generally admitted that people would be slow to believe such a charge against men whose names and known characters seemed to be an unanswerable reply to any such imputation. But this did not silence the advocates of the *first* theory, who said, that it was by no means improbable that our *savans* might have been deceived by others, or might have deceived themselves. It was hard to say what high-wrought "enthusiasm" and "subjective" causes might do: that they might have mistaken, and probably had, some mis-shapen stones with some undecipherable inscriptions upon them, for what their heated fancy had suggested; that when some *one* among them had once lighted on such a conjecture, it was easy to imagine all the rest following the antiquarian bellwether. As M. Renan said, in reference to Mary Magdalen and the resurrection—"When *one* had seen, there was no merit" (and no wonder) "in *others* seeing;" so it might be here. Some

of these gentlemen, indeed, asked with exquisite *naïveté*, “whether, since M. Renan had *proved* that the doctrine of the resurrection had arisen out of strange ‘subjective’ illusions on the part of the disciples (who had on many different occasions, collectively and simultaneously lost their wits, and misinterpreted the most ordinary facts into supernatural phenomena), the gentlemen of the Expedition might not have been in like manner their own dupes?” To this a good man replied, that *if* M. Renan’s theory was true, and the disciples, separately and together, had, time after time, simultaneously gone mad, he really knew no reason why the exploring party might not have gone mad too. “I quite admit,” said he, “that the one wonder would be no greater than the other. In the meantime, as I believe M. Renan’s hypothesis, as well as that of Paulus of Heidelberg (which is very like it), merely prove the hallucination of the authors, and not of the apostles, I am no more willing to admit the one supposition than the other. Besides,” said he, “if the very inscribed stones be really forthcoming, it would be very hard to imagine that these could be ‘subjective’ phenomena.” “Ay,” said the sceptics incredulously, “if they *be* forthcoming. But what proof have we that they will be; or if they are, that they have the legible characters upon them these folks profess to read there? or any characters at all

that are not as hard to be deciphered as the cuneiform writing of Assyria, or the hieroglyphics of Egypt?"

Finally, however, it was agreed by most people that it was of no use to "fight in the dark;" that we must wait the arrival of the explorers themselves, with, as they promised, the very "slabs." If they brought these, and they really bore, not illegible hieroglyphics, but plain orthodox Hebrew, it was agreed that the theory of "simultaneous hallucination" engendered of antiquarian enthusiasm would hardly apply. Everybody thought that blocks of stone were far too solid and massive to be "subjective phenomena;" and that if "simultaneous enthusiasm" had made the explorers read the same illegible or enigmatical characters the same way (though itself a very unaccountable piece of business), still their blunders would be corrected by other eyes. But it was also agreed that if all the world thought the inscriptions as legible as they had done, it would be hardly possible to get all the world to believe itself mad too.

And so methought the whole thing remained by general consent in abeyance, till this unique specimen of antiquities should be brought home. Not that everybody was silent; only those who felt that it was impossible to argue without data, and to talk with nothing to talk about, held their tongues. Among the many who can dispute in spite of such

a trifle as dearth of matter, controversy and conjecture still went on ; and thereby many actually put themselves out of condition to judge of the facts at the proper time, by nursing their minds in the impressions and prejudices originally taken up ; and, when proof came, were fully prepared, not to investigate, but to resist it. Not a few, I heard, decided the matter in their own rational way, by “laying bets” freely, that the slabs would never come ; and I was told that if they should, “a good deal of money would change hands.”

At length the day came, methought, when these curious relics of the Mosaic age arrived, and were safely lodged in the British Museum ; and of course all the world crowded to see them, as though it had never seen a Decalogue before ;—and, indeed, it was no doubt a pretty good while since some of the visitors *had* seen one. There it was, however, there could be no doubt of that ; large slabs, as seemed to me, ten feet square, with Hebrew characters upon them, no less than two inches long ; characters looking, it is true, rude and antique, and more angular than those in our printed Bibles, but still good legible Hebrew characters notwithstanding.

Men gazed and gazed at this Decalogue, as if they really had some intention of keeping it. Those who had done little but break the commandments all

their lives, now looked at them as earnestly as though they thought it was of the uttermost importance to ascertain their duty or make sure of their own condemnation. But in the majority of cases, I soon found they came only to gratify curiosity, to equip themselves to take a side, to find out what was to be said on either, to wrangle, to know what was speculatively true and right, and how to maintain it without one thought of practising it. Human nature was perfectly consistent in all this, for it has ever been more solicitous to speculate about duty than to do it; always professes a code of morals better than its practice, and is almost willing to become a martyr for doctrines and creeds which, nevertheless, it contradicts every day of its life!

Methought the spectacle became so popular, that excursion trains were organized from all parts of the country, and advertised in large placards almost as big as the Decalogue itself, with all the usual incitements to view any other taking novelty. People made parties to see it, just as they would to the Exhibition, or the Zoological Gardens, or the Crystal Palace; and, indeed, a great many Exhibitions were jealous of the Museum, and broke the "Decalogue" by "coveting" their neighbour's "Decalogue" exceedingly. Some, pecuniarily interested in such spectacles, hinted that it would be good for the "*public*," and good for "*religion*," if the venerable relic were

permitted to itinerate to all the principal show-places in the kingdom.

As people became accustomed to the phenomenon, the effects of familiarity showed themselves in a variety of ways, startling at first, but all of them, I fancy, characteristic enough of human nature ; and proving too clearly that the anticipations of Michaelis, as to the effect of any such accession of evidence, must be largely discounted. Tens of thousands, indeed, who visited the relic, did so with feelings of profound veneration ; but it was principally those who were already convinced. To *them* (as our author conjectured it would be), it was a strong confirmation of their faith. On the great Commands which they had so often lightly read and lightly repeated, and as often lightly broken, they looked with new emotions of awe and self-condemnation. According to the ordinary laws of association, by which mere novelty in the mode of presentation will vividly recall half-forgotten truth, reinvest a familiar object with all the interest which habit and custom have deadened, and dissolve the soul in a flood of unaccustomed emotion, they felt almost as if they had stood at the foot of the Burning Mount, and seen the tablets written by the finger of God Himself. Thousands more, who had indeed the otiose *historic* faith, but nothing besides, were in a measure similarly affected, and gazed on the memorials with a peculiar solemnity and awe ; and in

some of them I do think the impression remained (as Socrates says of the orators who so pleasantly tickled his vanity) for "three whole days, at least." But they were like their prototypes in the Parable ; their convictions "having no depth of earth," soon faded away. Their feeling was just as transient as that of the Israelites,—at whose fickleness, so often wondered at, I wondered no more. Like them, they were ready, in a couple of days or so, to worship again the "golden calf," as if these momentary emotions had never intruded themselves, and as if there had been no interruption of their customary absorption in the pursuit of gain or pleasure.

Others scarcely looked at the spectacle with any serious feeling at all. Without denying, any more than people in general, the reality of the discovery, or doubting that they were then actually gazing upon the relics which Joshua had set up more than three thousand years ago, to be the memorials to distant ages of the truth of the Mosaic history, and a salutary confirmation of men's faith in it, they soon learned to laugh and jest in the very presence of the venerable Memorials ! At first, I confess, I was astonished that any one should act thus, unless he discredited the discovery itself. But it only shows that I did not make adequate allowance for the moral paradoxes of which human nature is capable. For do not the very same class of people, in the very same conditions of mind,

often do the like in public worship, and giggle and jest in spite of the solemnities in which they are professedly engaged; and though they say they believe as much as anybody the great verities the preacher is expounding, and the authority of the Book which contains them? Or did these irreverent spectators behave at all differently from the bulk of those who frequent an oratorio,—that somewhat equivocal method of dramatising religious mysteries? Part of the audience no doubt,—to whom the music is the appropriate vehicle for conveying sentiments which, if divorced from it, leave it little more than, “a tinkling cymbal,”—feel with thrilling intensity the great truths of which it is so sublime an expression; and, like Handel himself, when he was found dissolved in tears over the attempt to embody his own conceptions of the pathos of those words, “He is despised and rejected,” are moved to deepest sympathy with the music. But thousands, whose whole soul—what little there is of it—is in their ears, or whose ears, like those of another animal, are their principal characteristic, can yet, without at all denying their conviction that the music *does* give expression to great truths (in which they will tell you they believe as much as anybody), so lose sight of the thought in the sound, of the truth in the vehicle of it, as to feel no impropriety at all, while coolly peeling an orange, in *encoring* the sorrows of Redeeming Love, or ap-

plauding with rapture a recitative of the Future Judgment. They are as little sensible of their own absurdity and indecorum as an audience (of which I was one) who were doing honour to a great composer, recently deceased, by listening to a *requiem* to his memory, and who actually so forgot the occasion as to demand, with much vociferation and gesticulation, its gratifying repetition,—which was accordingly given by the accommodating orchestra! And so the *requiem* for the dead served only to call forth noisy shouts from the living. It was much as if a man's funeral had been so charmingly “performed,” that nothing would satisfy his friends and relations but to have it performed over again!

As time went on, methought there were indications enough that even the extremest forms of human folly, knavery, and irreverence were no more capable of being repressed by *this* venerable symbol of religion than by any other. One rogue was detected, at an early hour, attempting to cut away some portion as a relic, or with a view to make gain of it; he had nearly, I was told, chipped off the words “Thou shalt not covet,” and that too with the words “Thou shalt not steal” staring him in the face. If he had not been found out in time, he would no doubt have stolen these too. Of some friends who expressed their horror at this, I asked, how it differed from the frequent case of ordinary sacrilege? if men would

break open the church box and steal altar-cloths and chalices, with all the Ten Commandments in full view why should we wonder that they were willing to steal the Decalogue itself? Or if they felt no compunction in running off with a rare Bible, why should they be expected to feel any in appropriating a few words of it?

In reply to some inquiries, the *custodier* told me that though the people in general behaved with becoming decorum, it was next to impossible to repress that odd passion for immortality by which many of the vulgar are impelled to scrawl their ignoble names on anything, however sacred; that more than once he had detected "John Smith" or "John Brown" endeavouring to inscribe those unlucky words on vacant spaces in the tablets. "But how can we wonder at it," said he, "when there is no place so hallowed that these names are not to be found there? It's my belief that either of these rogues would scrawl his name on the door of heaven itself, if he could ever get up to it. However," he added, "it could only be on the *outside*—that's *one* comfort!"

But with whatever various feelings, permanent or transient, of devout reverence, idle curiosity, or profane levity, the multitudes in general were disposed to contemplate this strange spectacle, one thing was clear; that, considered as an instrument of confuting the gainsayer or silencing scepticism (in which light principally Michaelis thought it

might be of value), our author had greatly over-rated it. "If men will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead."

I do not deny, indeed, that this singular piece of posthumous evidence had the effect he predicted in many cases, by arresting the attention of the candid sceptic, and leading to a renewed and serious weighing of the evidence for the truth of the sacred records generally ; but by no means in so many as one would have thought likely ; and it was really wonderful to see what a variety of plausible reasons were given why the relics should *not* be thought undoubtedly genuine. The theory, it is true, of "simultaneous" self-deception,—the result of a fanatical antiquarianism,—as to the meaning of the inscriptions, was given up as untenable so soon as the stones were safely lodged in the Museum ; the case was as hopeless as the theory of the Resurrection propounded by M. Renan. But it would have been a great mistake to suppose that scepticism had nothing further to say : on the contrary, there are few of the arguments against the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels which had not their ingenious counterparts in the reasons adduced for doubting the genuineness and authenticity of these relics.

For example, it was observed by some that it by no means followed that, because they were discovered

in such a locality, and in circumstances so suggestive of those mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy, they were as ancient as the time of Joshua; or that they were, after all, anything more than an imposture, though not on the part of the respected Explorers. "It is observable," said they, "that they were found in the limits of Samaria"—as if, by the way, they *could* be found (if they were genuine) anywhere else! "Now the Samaritans received the Pentateuch alone, and they were continually striving to establish a claim to equal participation in the glories of the Mosaic dispensation with their Jewish rivals. What more likely than that the Samaritans, at a far subsequent date to that of Moses—finding the injunctions in the Book of Deuteronomy, to 'set up' such memorials,—conceived the idea of giving *éclat* to their system of worship by getting *seeming* possession of so remarkable a fragment of antiquity; that for these reasons they erected the tablets on Mount Ebal, and forged a spurious relic of the days of Joshua?"—It was in vain to urge those who once took this idea into their heads, that there was no historic proof or probability of anything of the kind, and that the enmity and jealousy between the two races would have been sure to induce the Jews to proclaim and expose the cheat as soon as attempted; not to say that the tablets seem to have been utterly unknown to *both* parties till so wonderfully rediscovered! To this it was rejoined

that “we could not *reasonably* expect, in the dearth of historic information in relation to those remote times, to have every doubt cleared up, and that, to a certainty, a thousand important facts, which might have solved many a difficulty, had gradually vanished from history;”—an argument which a good many of us felt to come with singular grace and modesty from men who never for a moment allowed that *that* was a reason for not demanding a solution of every minute objection to the historic character of the Pentateuch or the Gospels.

One said that as the remains had been discovered on Mount *Ebal*, this, though it accorded with the locality assigned in the Hebrew Scriptures, contradicted the statement in the Samaritan Pentateuch—which gave Mount Gerizim as the true site. Now, he argued, if this (as even Michaelis thought) was the correct reading, these could not be the stones referred to by Moses: he added that, “for *his* part, he thought the Samaritan Pentateuch was *right*” (he gave no reasons, however), “and that at all events the contradiction between the two texts caused a grave difficulty, which, until it was fully cleared up, must leave the whole matter covered with doubt.”

Another man having observed a *crack* across one of the slabs, caused in moving it, (though happily it was not broken), shook his head sagely, as though he found reason to suspect a *callida junctura* there; and

significantly whispered to those about him that if we knew the full history of that "crack," we should, he suspected, get to the bottom of the mystery; instead of being as old as Joshua, possibly the whole would be found to have been put together "not a hundred years ago." But I must do the people the justice to say that few paid any heed to this insinuation, and seemed to think the "crack" was rather in his own head.

Some who flattered themselves that they had irrefragably proved, from the language of the Pentateuch, and an infinity of other arguments, that it cannot be referred to the date to which it has been generally ascribed,—possibly, they said, parts of it may be as *early* as the time of Ezra, or even Solomon,—here took advantage of their own wrong, and easily showed that as these tables were a faithful transcript of part of the Pentateuch, *they* also were incontestably of far later date than the age of Joshua. "In short," said one of them, "the contents of these inscribed tablets bear a most suspiciously close *resemblance* to the Decalogue, as given in the Pentateuch."

This theory—which was very acceptable to the multitudes who believe in the infallible nose of modern criticism, and its power of scenting out from internal evidence the age of any book—had like to have been imperilled by some one whose microscopic eye had discovered that, after all, there *were* some minute

variations in the forms of two or three words ; and who felt disposed to argue, not (as he ought to have done) that the preceding theory must be reconsidered, but that such “discrepancies” were fatal to the claims of a document which purported to be a *transcript* from the Pentateuch. In short, he reasoned much as sceptical critics do (or rather did, before Bentley refuted them) from similar unimportant “various readings” in the New Testament.

Another, who was not aware of any such discrepancies, and assumed that the one “Decalogue” was an exact duplicate of the other, thought that whichever of the two was the oldest, their exact conformity was a very suspicious circumstance. Some one asked him why two copies of the same thing should *not* be alike?

But, on being questioned, his reasoning was found plausible enough. He said that as the Pentateuch had continued in constant use, and had been continually transcribed from age to age, it would naturally be affected by, and latently bear on its face the various changes of inflection, spelling, and forms of words, which are the inevitable effects of time and custom on all languages ; just as we see that a modern edition of one of Sir Thomas More’s writings, or even of Bacon’s (though substantially to all intents and purposes the same as the earlier editions), yet exhibits innumerable diversities in these respects from

the old copies. But he was quickly silenced by those who had already been busy in proving that the absence of *archaisms* was one of the palmary arguments for demonstrating that the Pentateuch was of late date, and begged him for heaven's sake to hold his tongue. He did not see that in fact he was damaging this sceptical argument, which has been a good deal insisted upon in our day, namely, that the Pentateuch exhibits too near an approximation to the forms and idioms of a later age,—that it is not *archaic* enough. He was refuting that theory without knowing it !

One man, a learned Jew (as I afterwards found), a devoted admirer of the Rabbis, suggested another difficulty. He could not (he allowed), after the controversies of the last two centuries, maintain with the Rabbis of the middle ages the immemorial antiquity or the divine origin of the Hebrew points ; nor even persist in supposing them as old as Moses. But if he did not go quite so far as the elder Buxtorf on this question, he yet held for *certain* (what even Michaelis thought probable), that the vowel system had grown out of one simpler and older ; that let people say what they would about the *scriptio defectiva*, there never was a written language so “defective” as to have no better vowel notation than the poor *Yod* and *Aleph* on these tables. He would as soon have doubted the authority of Moses himself, as believe in documents so

deplorably naked of all trace of even the rudiments of *Kametz* or *Mappik*; and found the absence of all such rudiments a certain sign that the asserted antiquity of this copy of the Decalogue was a mere dream, not for a moment to be admitted by any genuine disciple of Rabbi Ben Solomon.

Another odd fellow, who, though a most orthodox believer, had given much time to the investigation of ancient alphabets, and had a passion for that class of antiquities, was convinced that in several momentous points, the letters did not correspond with the more ancient Jewish characters. How he could possibly tell, with any precision, what *was* the exact form of the letters in the time of Moses, was a puzzle to everybody but himself. But he decided that the characters approximated far too much to the present *square* letters; and that though (as many critics have conjectured) these "square" letters might have been very gradually developed out of Phœnician, yet that at all events the transformation had not occurred so early; and that the writing, if genuine, ought to have been *more* like that on "Hasmonean coins," and *less* like that of the "Palmyrene inscriptions." But this was a mere individual crotchet, which yet a *quantum sufficit* of pedantry and conceit rendered demonstration to *him*. It showed not merely (as some of the other crotchets did) on what trivial grounds men can ingeniously parry evidence which it is not pleasant to

receive ; but what is still stranger, how incomparably more powerful may be the veriest crotchet which has come to be indulged by a wayward fancy or perverted learning, than the strongest arguments, even when these last fall in with the habitual convictions of the men who indulge the whimsy : for the good man readily admitted the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch, and needed, as he said, no confirmation of his faith whatever. That Joshua put up tablets as ordered in Deuteronomy, he had no doubt ; but that these were the same, it was ridiculous to believe, while *Kophs* had such big heads and long legs, and *Gimels* were so suspiciously like *Nuns*.

One gentleman, I was told, had (in accordance with the characteristic tendency of modern science to pitch itself right into the most remote antiquity, and to find the solution of all mysteries there) delivered a lecture, in which he modestly threw out a hint that, from what he had heard of the *situs* in which, and the depth at which, the supposed remains were alleged to have been found, “he could not help having his doubts whether the *strata* had been disturbed for many centuries before the age of Moses ; and that, if so, it was a proof at once that a fraud had been committed, —as had been undoubtedly the case with some of the supposed ‘pre-Adamite relics’ that had been palmed upon the world.” In regard to these last relics indeed, his antiquarian *faith* was in general equal to anything ;

but in this case, he became suddenly sceptical. Some one gravely told him that, as he so readily received stone knives and arrow-heads found in a similar *situs*, as proof of the existence of man perhaps millions of years ago, he ought to complete his theory by receiving these remains on the same conditions, and so running up the Pentateuch (at least *this* portion of it) to the same antiquity with his *celts*. Half angry and half puzzled, he declared that he would sooner believe *that*, than the ordinary age and date of the Pentateuch on any such evidence as this story of the Mount Ebal Decalogue. Some who heard the lecture were seriously disposed from such premises to come to the conclusion, that these fragments of the Pentateuch, if not the Pentateuch itself, were thousands (why not millions?) of years older than had been generally supposed, and corroborative of the fact (now so often conceded by scientific men) of the unlimited antiquity of the human race. In short, whether it were proved that the books of Moses were a very late forgery, or genuine relics of pre-Adamite man, seemed equally satisfactory to many; always provided they were allowed not to have been composed at the time and by the persons generally imagined.

A solitary disciple of the old-fashioned atheism, who most unreasonably felt himself puzzled by these Stone Witnesses, when the whole universe, and the Bible to boot, gave him no trouble at all, condescended to visit

the Museum, and soon came to the conclusion that a "notable trick" had been palmed on the world; and, turning to me, asked what could be the "*design*" of it? I told him gravely that I did not believe in any arguments from "design;" and that I could not see, since he believed that all the visible universe, and everything in it (in a word, whatever showed "marks of design)," were the effect of impersonal chance, or impersonal and unconscious law, why he should not believe that the same impersonal agencies had produced these inscrutable blocks of stone. He evidently hardly knew whether to be angry with me, or to agree with me. "However," said he, "*suppose* the thing to be the effect of design, what could the design be?" I told him that, though I did not see any reason, in his case, why he should trouble himself about the matter, as his theory would solve any phenomena whatever; yet I thought the *design*, if design there was, was plain enough. "And what is that?" said he. "Why," said I, with grave simplicity, "to tell man that he is to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, which last I think we can hardly do, if we lightly suspect people of the most impudent frauds, as at present you seem rather inclined to do."

But, after all, the most wonderful part of the whole thing was not the facility with which men made their escape from evidence which it was unpleasant to receive, or the ingenuity and plausibility of some of

their hypotheses invented for this purpose, or—when nothing plausible could be offered,—the trumpery arguments with which the Will hoodwinked the Understanding ; I say this was not the most wonderful part of the spectacle. Nor was my surprise chiefly excited even by what was incomparably more wonderful,—the inappreciable difference the discovery made in the bulk of those who, so far from feeling any disposition to deny that it was a great confirmation of the truth of the Scriptures, were quite willing to allow that it was so ; for why, in sober earnest, should they regard the new copy of the Decalogue any more than they had done the old, or a small part of the Bible than the whole of it ? I say it is not these things that most surprised me ; there was one thing that surprised me still more ; it was to see many vehemently and too literally *swearing* by the claims of this sacred relic to profound veneration, though their whole language and bearing showed that they had not only no knowledge of the subject, but cared not a groat about it ; and who zealously broke the Commandments in the very terms in which they contended for them.

On one occasion, I remember, on a rude, pert sceptic's making some remark of an offensive kind, a countryman told him in great dudgeon, and with a profane oath, that he was a scurvy rascal ; and added that “he would be hanged” (he used, I am sorry to say, a much stronger word) “if he would let any one

laugh at *his* religion, and that if it was not for the company, he would teach him to know *better*.”—Another, equally devout, was rejoiced to find these supplementary proofs given to the claims of the Bible: “In these sceptical times,” he said, “it is a devilish good thing; and here is an argument which that old rogue Colenso, and all his infernal crew of Zulus, will find it hard to meet.”

Methought I was awoke out of my dream by a curious incident. One sturdy sceptic, who had puzzled himself with the various theories for getting over the difficulty without implicating the character of the exploring party (just as Strauss and other sceptics attempt to account for the falsehood of the Gospel history without touching the character of the Apostles), and had found himself dissatisfied with them all, at last came back (as Strauss has done in the case of Christianity) to the conclusion that there had been, after all, some gross cheating in the matter, and that the explorers, as he said aloud, had been “playing the knave.” It so happened that one of these gentlemen was standing near him, and before the words were well out of his mouth,—being a man of high honour and quick sensibility,—he fairly knocked the unlucky sceptic head over heels, at the same time saying: “And who are you, or any like you, that you should think yourselves of sufficient importance to induce a number of honourable men to perjure them-

selves, and undergo infinite pains, trouble, and ignominy, just to deceive you into an unprofitable lie? Do you think we should submit to all this for the purpose of hoodwinking such a stupid old owl as you,—that needs no deceiving at all, but can deceive himself at any time, especially if he be brought into the sunlight?” I really thought it was an answer which Moses himself, Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs (though perhaps not in terms so *brusque*, and certainly without the *argumentum baculinum*, which in this case accompanied it), might have reasonably addressed to many a suspicious sceptic who has doubted their honour, veracity, and even common sense.

There is, perhaps, little probability of the Palestine Exploration Society’s fulfilling the anticipations of Michaelis, or turning my dream into a reality. But if they do not find the “Memorial Stones” in question, it is certain they will find many highly valuable and curious confirmations of sacred writ. God has, no doubt, concealed in his archives—the bosom of the earth—many a monument which shall explain or reconcile the difficulties, or corroborate the statements, of His own Word, and we may reasonably believe that they will yield themselves to persevering search. The society may rest assured there are thousands who are watching their labours with the greatest interest.

III.

CHRISTIANITY VINDICATED FROM
ALLEGED TENDENCIES TO PERSECUTION.

OUR age has not been unfruitful in theological paradox ; but few are bolder than that which asserts that Christianity, by implication, if not directly, patronises the spirit of persecution, and must be held responsible for the excesses which have been perpetrated in its name.

That Christians, so called, like many millions of men *not* so called, have been persecutors, is most true ; but, in so far as they have been such, it is demonstrable that they have not been Christians. Nothing can be plainer than that in its letter and its spirit, by precept and example, by direct assertion and oblique inference, the code of Christianity, as expounded in its only authentic statute-book, the New Testament, utterly proscribes *all* persecution ; all attempts to coerce men's wills, or to gain adhesion to its doctrines by any other means than those of conviction and persuasion.

When John and James chafed in angry mood

against those Samaritans who, acting on the genuine maxims of persecution, peremptorily refused to admit Christ and his disciples (the objects of their national bigotry) into their village, they but acted as human nature, Jewish or Samaritan, is but too apt to act. "Shall we," said they, "call down fire from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did?" Christ rebuked them in words never to be forgotten, and which ought to have determined all such points for His disciples through all time: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." No fairer plea for coercion and punishment could be conceived than that suggested in the contumelious rejection of the Master himself; and yet the Master himself overruled it.

Similarly, the texts which tell us that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" that we are to "be gentle unto all men, in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth;" that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual;" that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world," and many others, imply the same thing.

Further, the general maxims which Christianity inculcates, and which have so often been represented as paradoxes of an impracticable patience and meekness; those, for example, which enjoin us "not to

return evil for evil," "to overcome evil with good," "not to resist evil," "to turn the left cheek to him who smites us on the right," "to yield our coat to him who has taken away our cloak," and "with him who would compel us to go one mile, to go twain;" all these prove, *à fortiori*, that it is utterly forbidden to the Christian to persecute; unless he can plead a distinct dispensation from them, nay, a liberty to invert them all, wherever men are *not* Christians, or not *such* Christians as himself; that is to say, towards nearly all mankind! With whatever limitations the last three maxims be received, and common sense will naturally interpret the extreme and variously coloured figurative language rather as a rhetorical expression of the predominant *spirit* of meekness which Christ inculcates, than as rules to be literally acted upon, they are, at all events, utterly inconsistent with persecution in every form. In a word, the whole of the New Testament as clearly condemns persecution in the followers of Christ, as the Decalogue forbids theft or murder. To charge, therefore, the persecutions which have so deeply stained the page of ecclesiastical history on Christianity itself, is to charge a code with the crimes which have been committed in violation of it; with the crimes of those who professed and owed allegiance to it, but never paid it! And the defence of Christianity would, in this respect, be complete, if not only many Christians, but all of them, had been

persecutors ; nay, if every one of them had been as bad as Bonner.

All men have broken some of the commands of the Decalogue, and not a few have broken all ; but no one would argue that the Decalogue does not condemn their acts. All moral systems, even the very worst that men have professed, have still been better than the conduct of the men who professed them ; but no one supposes that the systems, therefore, sanction the very things they condemn. In like manner, the character of the code in every country is naturally judged by the terms of its statute-book alone ; by the letter and spirit of its express prohibitions, and not by the degree in which it is obeyed or infringed. The law remains the same (good or bad, as the case may be), and is not answerable for those who warp or break it, let the judges be ever so corrupt, let the gaols be ever so full. But, in truth, in no other case but Christianity are men so unreasonable as to make any system whatsoever responsible for the very conduct it expressly condemns, or the faults of those who set it at defiance.

If it be asked, how is it, then, that Christians have so often been persecutors ? the answer is, that in this, as well as in many other respects, men, in corrupting Christianity, warped it to the maxims and passions of their own nature, a process by which at last it was so transmuted as to bear a very close resemblance to

religions of undoubted human origin ; and worse could not befall it.

As the Pharisees at length made “the law of God of none effect by their traditions,” so the corruption of the Christian Church gradually obliterated some of the divinest features of the Gospel, and stamped upon it the human “image and superscription” instead. The shape into which man instinctively moulded it, was determined by the law of his corrupt nature and the fashion of his previous *chefs-d’œuvre* of religious manufacture. That he should have taught it to *persecute*, is not at all more wonderful than that he should have invented for it a purgatory ; reconsecrated idolatry in new forms ; substituted ten thousand intercessors for one ; shut the Bible, and worshipped in an unknown tongue ; commuted the moral and spiritual for the ceremonial ; appraised sin at a money value, and sold pardons and indulgences by the penny-weight. And as, in these changes, Christianity was but assimilated to many religions which existed before it, and others that exist still ; so, in teaching it to persecute, man taught it to do what human nature was always prone enough to do, and had been most diligently practising against Christianity itself all through the first three hundred years of its history !*

* It has been well said by one who wrote the “History of Toleration,” “Persecution has not resulted from any particular system, but from the prevalence of ignorance, and the force of those illiberal prejudices which are natural to the mind of un-

One would imagine that, with such a code, it was not very easy to represent *Christianity* as a patron of persecution, however guilty its professed *disciples* might be. Nor, perhaps, would even the hardest objector venture to charge it with directly inculcating it. Still, if we may believe M. Renan,* *Christianity* naturally tends to persecution, by the very fact of its “being a faith which asserts that it is exclusively true ;” and that every *such* Faith—that is, every Faith which does not think that Truth may be manifold—will be apt to persecute too ! Further, that if a man is willing to “die” for the truth, he is very likely to be willing to “kill” for it. But let us hear the passage ; it occurs *apropos*—or, more correctly speaking, *mal-apropos*—of the account of the martyrdom of St. Stephen :—

“And thus opened the era of Christian martyrs.

tutored men.” An acute critic on this passage justly rejects any such qualification : “In fact it may be laid down as a fundamental principle that intolerance is *natural* to man in every state of society.”—*Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxvi.

“Nor can this remnant of the spirit of Romanism be so called, in the sense of making the peculiar system of that Church properly the *cause* of it, because we find the same principle manifested in its full force among the Mahometans, who cannot in any way be regarded as deriving it from Romanism.

“It is derivable rather from the character of the ‘natural man,’ from the natural feelings of resentment against opponents, of love of control, and of a desire to promote apparent good.”—*Whately's “Errors of Romanism,”* pp. 243-4.

* In his recent book, *Les Apôtres*.

Martyrdom was not altogether a thing unknown. Not to speak of John the Baptist and of Jesus, Judaism, at the epoch of Antiochus Epiphanes, had had its faithful witnesses, even to the death. But the succession of courageous victims, which began with St. Stephen, has exercised a peculiar influence on the *history of the human mind*. It introduced into the western world a sentiment which was foreign to it,—an exclusive and absolute Faith; the notion that there is but *one* religion that is good and true. *In this sense, the martyrs commenced the era of intolerance. One may say, with a good deal of probability, that he who would give his life for his faith, would be intolerant if he had the power.* Christianity, which passed through three centuries of persecution, having become in its turn predominant, was more persecuting than any religion that ever existed. When a man has shed his blood for a cause, he is too ready to shed the blood of other people, in order to preserve the treasure he has acquired.”*

On this curious passage I would make a few remarks:—

“In this sense, the martyrs introduced the era of intolerance!” It would not be easy to find a better illustration of the fable of the wolf accusing the lamb of troubling the waters. One might almost as well say that not Cain, but Abel, introduced “the era” of murders into the world, or that the slaughtering of

* *Les Apôtres*, p. 148.

sheep introduced the era of butchers ; though it were surely more intelligible to say that the era of butchers introduced the slaughtering of sheep. There must have been persecutors before there could be martyrs ; and before there were Christian persecutors, we know that heathen persecutors had been making Christian martyrs for three hundred years ; a tolerable proof that “the era of intolerance ” dates higher than *Anno Domini*, and that persecution is no special characteristic of those who believe that there is but one religion “exclusively true.” On the contrary, it was practised by those whose indifferentism and levity could in other cases theoretically tolerate anything. In truth, it is too late to trace the lineage of intolerance to Christianity, with the history of the first three centuries before us.

But the fallacies in the passage do not end with this odd anachronism—this curious example of putting the “cart before the horse.” Is it a *fact* that the belief in a religion which asserts itself to be “exclusively true ” is at all necessarily connected with persecution ? History does not bear out this statement. It is quite true that men are universally apt to assert their own dogmas with undue vehemence, and in proportion to their supposed importance : apt to be angry if they are contradicted ; and if there be the power, apt to use violence to give effect to them. It is a tendency, not peculiar to *religion* only, but common to *politics*,

sometimes even to philosophy and science ; for even these too can get angry and unjust in their eagerness to assert their own doctrines, or suppress those of their opponents. But this is the fault of *human nature*, and not of the “exclusive” character of any presumed Truth. It is human nature that has thus imported into the controversy between Truth and Error what did not belong to it. But that the connection is not necessary, is found in this one plain fact—that History clearly shows it to be, not invariable, but accidental.

Not only did Christianity uncompromisingly affirm the “exclusive” validity of its doctrines, and yet teach, side by side with them, and as *one* of them, that no violence should be used on its behalf ; not only did Christ himself, who made the most unlimited claims, inculcate, as He also practised, lessons of the most unlimited charity ; not only did Christianity for three centuries maintain the same exclusive claims, and yet renounce all “carnal weapons” in its support ; but when, after ages of spiritual slumber, our forefathers, by a renewed study of the Gospel, and a distinct appeal to its principles, vindicated and established the doctrines of religious freedom, they still held as firmly as any man could, the “exclusive and absolute” truth of Christianity ; and millions, since their day, have not thought there was any inconsistency in sincerely holding both positions. Indeed

it requires no long demonstration to prove that there would be the grossest inconsistency in *not* holding both ; for on the one hand, if there be Truth at all, its claims *must* be exclusive, unless Truth, like Error, can be manifold ; and on the other hand, Truth cannot in the nature of things be propagated by violence, or by anything but conviction and persuasion ; in other words, only under the auspices of liberty. And we must be pardoned for saying that if our forefathers had *not* believed in the paramount and exclusive claims of Christianity, we have some doubts whether we should ever have recovered our liberties at all ; whether they would have had the courage and fortitude to face the dangers and sufferings necessary for this purpose. Certain it is, that no man is more willing to remain a timid and slavish adherent of the system “that is in possession,” no matter what,—more willing “to remain where he is,” than many a modern champion of the doctrine that “doctrine is of no consequence,” and “one religion as true and as good as another.”

We see then in point of *fact*, that millions within the last two centuries have been perfectly convinced that Christianity is “absolutely and exclusively true,” and yet have had no disposition to cut other people’s throats, or even mulct or imprison them, if they did not adopt the same opinions ; and millions still hold both dogmas in conjunction ; as indeed they cannot but do, if they sincerely believe the New Testament. Thou-

sands of these, like the early champions of the great doctrine of religious liberty, would be perfectly willing to be martyrs for either the one or the other of the terms of this supposed disjunction ;—for the exclusive Truth of the Gospel, or the Rights of Conscience recognised by it. But in fact there is no sort of connection between the terms of these propositions : “ I believe this to be an absolute religious truth,” and “ I believe therefore that it is my duty to lay violent hands on anybody who gainsays or denies it ;” * but least of all to him who knows what he is talking about : since, whether Truth be exclusively with him or not, he knows, not only that with whomsoever it is, it *must* be exclusive in its claims, but that it is not worth a farthing to anybody that professes it unless it be received as the result of moral conviction, and therefore voluntarily embraced.

The tendency, then, to persecute may or may not be connected (as we see, in fact) with the presumed possession of “ exclusive and absolute religious truth ;” that variable connection itself shows that it is but accidental. When the disposition to persecute exists, therefore, it must be traced to other principles, and these are not far to seek. They are, in fact, none other than the impatience of opposition and greed of dominion,

* On this subject some admirable remarks will be found in Whately's *Essays on “Persecution,”* in *Errors of Romanism*, pp. 248—250.

which readily enough explain the analogous excesses both of secular and spiritual despotism. There is no more difficulty in accounting for the one set of enormities than the other ; and one origin will sufficiently account for both. The *fons malorum* is in human nature : in its pride and selfishness, its fiery impatience of opposition, its imperious will ; in the hateful disposition of Power, to ride rough-shod over all who are opposed to it, to make everybody think (or *say* he thinks) as it bids, or cease to think at all. That same disposition, which is the cause of all tyranny, made man, in corrupting the Gospel, corrupt it in the sense and direction of his own usurping nature, whereby it became as easy for him to cancel the plainest and clearest prohibitions of persecution, as it is for the ordinary tyrant to sponge out, in favour of his own arrogant will, the instincts of humanity and conscience, and all the sanctions of the eternal, though unwritten, law. No doubt both the religious tyrant and the political tyrant will gloze over, and varnish their evil deeds by plausible pretexts (for this is a necessity of human nature, for its own peace sake) : the one prating of preventing the spread of deadly error ; and the other, of preventing the spread of as deadly anarchy : but the true motives, which these things only mask, are the same in each. There is no reason why we should seek for any other origin of the truculence of a Bonner than that which explains the truculence of a Jeffries ;

and the same cruel passions and maxims which filled the cells of the Bastile will, (variously modified), suffice to fill the cells of the Inquisition.

The closing statement of the paradoxical passage I am commenting on is not less curious than the rest. "We may say, with probability, that he who gives his life for his faith, would be intolerant, if he were to obtain the ascendancy ; and that when a man has shed his blood for a cause, he is too much disposed to shed the blood of other people, in order to preserve the treasure he has acquired." If there is any plausibility at all in this last sentence, it is because the form of expression disguises the difference between *active* and *passive*. In a figurative sense certainly, the martyr may be said "to shed his own blood," but he is quite passive, notwithstanding. M. Renan would find it not so plausible to assert that if a man is willing to *be made* a martyr for a cause, he is very likely to make martyrs of other people. So far as there is any truth in the statement at all, it has no special relation to Christianity. In a persecuting age, and among a persecuting people (no matter what the religion), mutual wrongs will no doubt inflame mutual hatred, and either party, having more angry men than willing martyrs, will be apt to persecute when it is the stronger. But to suppose that those who have *voluntarily* submitted to death, would have been the most ready to inflict it on others—that a Polycarp would have

made an excellent Dominick, and Latimer a conspicuous Inquisitor, we see as little reason to believe as that a murdered man would be likely to have been a murderer ; or that because it is true that he

“Who rules o’er freemen should himself be free,”

therefore we must believe Johnson’s parody of the line, and say,

“Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat.”

M. Renan says that “ Christianity, which had passed through three centuries of persecution, became (once made predominant) more persecuting than any religion that has ever existed.” The statement may, perhaps, be disputed. Whether Imperial Rome, or Papal Rome, or Mohammedanism is best entitled to the unenviable palm of a victorious cruelty, may well perplex any student of history to decide. But be this how it will, all that is necessary for a reasonable advocate of *Christianity* to maintain is, that whether a corrupt Christianity stand first or last in the list, it attains its bad eminence in virtue of its being assimilated to that same human nature which inspired both the religion of Imperial Rome and that of the Arabian impostor. The statute-book of Christianity renounces and condemns the counterfeit that assumes her name.

Another, though not novel, argument to prove that Christianity encourages persecution, has been recently

insisted on. It has been urged that its appalling doctrine of "Future Punishments" necessarily tends to *steel* the heart to pity, and in a manner compels the *humane* mind to adopt cruel means for the repression of errors and heresies that would involve such fearful consequences. It is, perhaps, superfluous to remark that one half of this argument answers the other; for, if the doctrine in question tends to sear the heart and inure it to cruelty, it is hard to say what room it leaves for that exquisite humanity which, in pure compassion, consigns men to rack and faggot, to prevent worse consequences! But in point of fact, the argument breaks down, in whatever point of view it is considered.

First, even if we were to grant that the darkest aspect of the doctrine in question was the incontrovertible view of the New Testament (which, however, a not inconsiderable, and probably increasing party deny to be its correct interpretation), still it cannot annul the express injunctions of that same book (regarded by *all* as incontrovertible), to abstain from all persecution; and therefore, as already said, *Christianity* cannot be answerable for the infractions of its rule, let men's reasons be ever so plausible. The Gospel is perfectly clear in the matter of persecution, and at once vindicates itself from any tampering with it, under pretended dread of the consequences of its doctrine on *other* points.

Secondly, as already hinted, it is not very easy to imagine a *humanity* that takes so eccentric a way of manifesting itself.

Thirdly, as a recent writer (in the *Times* if we mistake not), has well observed, the argument cuts both ways ;—for a *humane* man would naturally think that so much more dreadful a retribution to the heretic than he could inflict might well absolve him from any attempt to anticipate or increase it ; and that, for others, the menace of it might serve (if anything could) as a warning to them, quite as well as the humane cruelty of Inquisitors ;—which last, as experience has long since convinced the world, is by no means an infallible *malleus hereticorum*.

Fourthly, that though it need not be denied that there have been persecutors here and there (as Sir Thomas More or Cranmer, for example), who honestly persuaded themselves that they were torturing men's bodies out of love to men's souls, yet the general characteristics of the coarse insolent spirits who have delighted in work of this kind, and done the principal part of the religious carcass-butchers of the world,—the Alvas and the Bonners,—show that when they dropped men's bodies into the fire, in order to snatch men's souls out of it, they were no more prompted by humanity, than were the great despots and tyrants of another kind, who have inflicted similar and equal cruelties on their species without any such pretended

reasons at all.* Indeed, considering the enormous load of suffering under which the wickedness of ordinary despotism has made mankind groan, it seems ludicrous to account for that which a parallel religious despotism has inflicted, by supposing it the result, not of vulgar passions, which will account (as a general rule) equally for both, but of a subtle *humanity*, which, though mistaken in its means, was naturally misled, by ingenious deductions from *one* doctrine of Christianity, utterly to ignore and trample under foot *another*, and that other written as with a sunbeam on every page of the New Testament ! It is, perhaps, hardly too much to suspect that this half-apology for the excesses of religious persecution (which, in fact, as little need far-fetched theories to account for them as the analogous excesses of other forms of man's depravity) would not have been offered, but for the sinister purpose of damaging Christianity, by making it in some way responsible for the persecutions, which nevertheless, it so explicitly forbids and condemns.

Fifthly, it may be remarked, that if the theory were worth a pin, and the doctrine in question be naturally and necessarily connected with persecution, then those who held it could certainly never have discovered (and

* "The desire," says Whately, "of saving men from the dreadful doom in the next world denounced on those 'who do not obey the truth,' has often been a reason, and oftener *perhaps a plea*, for seeking to enforce a right faith, and to put down religious error by all possible means."

least of all out of the Gospel itself) the other doctrine,—that all persecution is unlawful. Yet we all know that the principles of religious liberty and toleration were, after ages of persecution, first reasserted and vindicated, out of the Gospel itself, by those who still firmly held the dogma of eternal punishment; and that these principles are now as zealously maintained to be indisputable doctrines of Scripture, by those who affirm as by those who deny that dogma. They are just as zealous advocates of the rights of conscience as any sceptics can possibly be. If it be said (as has been said) that this is because men do not really believe this appalling doctrine, then the argument answers itself; for certainly a doctrine which is not believed will neither account for the cruelty, nor the humanity, nor that strange *tertium quid*, the humane cruelty, by which it is supposed to lead inevitably to persecution!

And *lastly*, as if to show that by every test of the Baconian induction, this theory must be rejected, not only is it true that the doctrines of religious toleration were first vindicated and established by those who never questioned the obnoxious dogma; but religious parties who never supposed that the differences between them involved any such dreadful results as the forfeiture of salvation, or doubted that both the one side and the other might get safe to heaven, have been too often just as prompt to persecute one another, as if they had been divided by the deadliest

heresy. Not only have Papists burnt Protestants, and Protestants burnt Papists, but Protestants have cruelly persecuted one another, though all unanimously conceded that the faith of their opponents contained everything that was essential to salvation.

It is, indeed, a mystery of wickedness that men should thus have warped the plain literal declarations of what they professed to revere as the statute-book of their Master. Yet it is clear that neither He nor it is responsible for this. It was part of man's "New Gospel," his corrupted edition of the original institute;—one of the very points wherein it differs from the genuine *Ἐυαγγέλιον*, which, in this respect as in so many others, contradicts the original tendencies of his nature. When man remodelled the Gospel by corrupting it, he, in this as in other points, acted upon the usual plan of idolaters, "who make a God after their own image." The sublime idea of a religion claiming to be exclusively authoritative, and yet disclaiming peremptorily all violence and coercion in its propagation—monopolising exclusive truth, and yet asserting and conceding universal liberty—had never presented itself to the minds of merely mortal religion-makers. The forms of toleration with which the ancient world was familiar, fell far short of any such conception. As may be easily shown, they were a result either of that indifferentism, which may well tolerate what it does not care about; or of the indolent,

unambitious temper of the local and national idolatries, whose gods sociably partitioned out the moral Poland among themselves, and were content each with his own share ; or, in the case of Rome, of that astute policy, which ever characterised her, and by which she reconciled the subject nations to her iron rule ; a policy which she abandoned the moment she found herself face to face with a moral system, which, though abjuring all “carnal weapons,” aspired to a still wider and more durable dominion than her own, and portended, as she fancied, trouble to her in the attempt to achieve it.

Modern sceptics, of course, applaud with Gibbon, the toleration generally practised by the ancient heathen, and are fond of contrasting it favourably with the too common bigotry of both Jew and Christian. It is a topic of praise which has been often copiously dwelt upon, and sometimes in exaggerated terms ; for, as Bentley says in his reply to Collins, the examples of Socrates, Aristotle, Diagoras, and others ; the frequent jealousies not only of the partisans of different systems of idolatry, but even of “sects” of the same idolatry ; the mutual wrongs which, according to Juvenal, were inflicted by religious animosity, when it awkwardly happened that one man devoutly worshipped the God which another man ate, shows that even the most easy-going heathenism could, upon occasion, become intolerant. As to Rome (the peculiar object of pane-

gyric), her toleration seems to have been entirely measured by her policy. In her earlier days, and when the elements of her population were comparatively homogeneous, she could be jealous of the integrity of the old Roman rites, and (as Livy, Cicero, and other writers show) again and again issued severe decrees against religious innovations. When she became the mistress of the world, she doubtless found, like other great empires, that it was more easy to induce the subject nations to submit to her political rule, than to abandon their religion ; and, as her truly practical policy aimed only at a civil uniformity, she, as already said, astutely humoured them all in the matter of their gods. There was no reason why she should not, as long as these gods were content to dwell on easy terms with one another, satisfied each with his own share of worshippers, his daily sniff of sacrificial smoke, and dole of libation and incense. But the true nature and limits of her toleration were at once disclosed the moment a system arose which asserted "absolute and exclusive truth," and avowed its determination to achieve, though by moral means alone, a victory over the rival creeds. Three centuries of bitter persecution proved how intolerant Rome really was, in spite of all her boasted lenience. They proved that it is not necessarily those who *assert* a system "exclusively true," that persecute for it ; those who only hear it propounded, can persecute quite as

rigorously. But the toleration which Gibbon so highly applauds, even while it lasted, was assuredly of little worth. It was the expression of contemptuous indifference, and sprang neither from a sympathetic charity, nor any lofty sense of the rights of conscience. How could it, when it was founded upon a state of things so epigrammatically expressed by the historian himself? He says, and truly, "that in the view of the philosopher, all religions were equally false; in the view of the vulgar, all equally true; in the view of the statesman, all equally expedient." All these might easily tolerate what they felt either indifference or contempt for. In truth, it was a toleration not altogether unlike that which is often pleaded for in the present day, and had about the same merit.

There are those, for example, who tell us that "dogma is of little consequence," and that it is of the essence of intolerance to assert for any one doctrine that it is "absolute and exclusive truth." Now, of course, if dogmas are of no importance, a wise man will be indifferent to them all; and all who are as indifferent as himself, may well indulge one another in their trivial or accidental preferences. Substitute now "dogma" for "idol," and you will have a state of things much resembling that in virtue of which all the divinities of Olympus, Syria, and Egypt, interchanged courtesies and good offices. In some respects, indeed, this modern toleration exceeds the ancient; Greeks

and Romans never seem to have thought that the votaries of Jupiter, Bacchus, and Venus, could really all worship at the same time, in the same temple, and with the same formularies; and still less deemed it a *privilege* of their religious liberty, not to let it be even clearly known of what deity they were the worshippers.

Religious liberty is indeed a most precious and sacred thing, and by it I understand the right of any man, uncoerced, unmolested by his fellows,—without bribe or menace,—to form, and manfully *avow*, his religious opinions, let them be what they may.

But one of the most precious of the privileges of our new form of liberty is sometimes alleged to be, that, if loss of stipend or position be involved, we need not manfully *avow*, but may timidly conceal our opinions, or express them with politic ambiguities or subterfuges. What should we think of a political liberty of the like kind? What should we say to a man boasting of his political liberty, who if we asked him, “And what, my friend, are your opinions? with which party do you side? what policy do you advocate?” should rejoin—“Tell you my opinions? You shall not catch me tripping, I promise you. No, it is one of the immunities of my political liberty, to keep all my political opinions to myself.” “Why, as to *that*,” would be the reply, “it is an equal privilege of political slavery also.” Surely this curious sort of

liberty is the genuine product of those same views which dictated the saying ascribed to M. Talleyrand and to so many more, "That the tongue was given us, not to *express* but to *conceal* our thoughts." Such concealment may be called *liberty* in religion, but it would certainly be deemed *slavery* in politics. But this liberty sometimes goes further.

In Dutch, and French, and German churches, we find men who have written books on the very model of M. Renan's, who reject every shred of the miraculous history of Christ, and every one of the characteristic doctrines of Christianity, yet asserting, and their compatriots echoing, their right to retain their professorial chairs and pulpits ! But the toleration which it implies is a step beyond the toleration even of the ancient polytheists.

The combination, in Christianity, of a claim to authoritative truth and undivided allegiance, with an absolute prohibition of all application of force in its propagation,—leaving its rewards and punishments alike to a Future State,—forms one of the many peculiar traits which discriminate this religion from others of acknowledged human origin. The toleration of the ancient world, so far as it existed, mainly depended on the recognition of many co-ordinate deities, and on the theory that one religious system might be as good as another. Whenever a religion, like Mahometanism, denied this, and made exclusive

pretensions to authority, then coercion and persecution were appealed to.

For similar reasons, when human nature proceeds to remodel, or in other words, corrupt Christianity, it rends asunder the above two elements originally conjoined in it, and either affirms with our forefathers, that persecution is the complement of exclusive claims to allegiance, or denies, with too many in the present day, that exclusive claims can consist with perfect toleration, and that consequently a repudiation of such claims is the complement of religious freedom. But the statute-book of Christianity distinctly affirms both the elements in question : and it is one of the evidences that it is *not* of human origin, that in this, as in so many other respects, it is sharply discriminated from the religions which man has fabricated, and no less from its transformed self, whenever man remodels it (as he naturally will), in the direction of his own passions and prejudices.

In truth, this trait of Christianity, however unknown to other religions, is so far from being paradoxical in itself, that it constitutes one of the many “analogies,” in addition to those which Butler has given us, of its correspondence with the “constitution and course of nature.” The Moral Government of God, like Christianity, asserts its exclusive, authoritative, and inviolable claims. Yet precisely because it *is* moral, and addressed to beings with Reason, Conscience, and Will,

it not only declares that no coercion shall be used, but that no coercion can ; that being moral, it must be left to its subjects to obey or disobey it. It simply says, "Take or leave, but you must accept the consequences." In like manner does Christianity assert exclusive authority and universal liberty at the same time.

It becomes a very interesting question, how it *happens* that in this, as in so many other points, unsophisticated Christianity, as laid down in the New Testament, is so strongly discriminated from other religions ; thereby showing that it is not a religion which man was *likely* to invent, and affording a strong confirmation of its superhuman origin. It is a point, however, which the opponents of Christianity too generally disregard. They content themselves for the most part with insisting on the fancied resemblances between Christianity, and other religions that are admitted to be of human origin, and therefore infer that *this* religion too may have had a similar origin. But it is far more to the purpose, as well as more difficult, to account for the *differences*. Of the two chief elements of the philosophical genius (according to Bacon), the faculty of seizing *analogies* and the faculty of discriminating *differences*, the latter, in the present case, is incomparably the more important. Christianity and other religions, *so far forth as* they are religions, must have some points of resemblance. The most clumsy counterfeits, the most spurious imitations,

must, in order to have any power to deceive at all, have their similarities to what is genuine. The great point is to detect and account for the differences.

The Christian apologist has reason to complain of the adversaries of Christianity in this matter. For example, if the appeal be to Miracles, the answer often is:—"Oh, every religion has its tales of miracles!" But to say nothing of the *character* or the *historic* evidence of the Christian Miracles, as compared with others, has any other religion, except the Jewish, been *based* on an appeal to miracles? Has any other, on *such* appeal, procured assent to its claims in the presence of a prejudiced and hostile world? It is easy to account for miraculous stories grafted upon a system which can plead long prescription,—for legends which have grown up gradually amongst its devoted partisans. But what religion, except Christianity, ever successfully *appealed* to miracles in an historic age, and in the face of such prejudices and hostility as both Jew and Gentile felt towards it? We know that Mahomet declined the test; and the few like the "French prophets" a century ago, who have attempted anything of the kind, have signally and instantly failed.

Similarly; if reference be made to the fact of Christ's Resurrection, we are told by writers like M. Renan, "Oh, we see in all ages of the world, multitudes who mistook maniacal hallucinations for divine realities; the illusions of a Bedlamite, or of some petty sect of

enthusiasts, are as real to them as the visions of the Apostles were to *them*." But does the "Bedlamite," or the "petty sect," inaugurate, as M. Renan admits the Apostles did, a new era in the world's history, and give it "a new religious code for humanity?" Do they ever get the world to go mad too? The "Bedlamite" gets nothing but to be shut up in Bedlam, and the petty sect is only laughed at, as hundreds of them have been, and then passes away.

Again; if appeal be made to the extent to which this religion has spread in the face of so mighty obstacles, the answer is, "Oh, every *nation* and every *race* has its favourite superstitions, propagates them with avidity, and supports them by its power." But what we want to know is, how it was that *this* religion set at nought the lines of demarcation between *nation* and *nation*, and *race* and *race*, intruded its own peculiar doctrines and worship in the place of their cherished superstitions, and found a tongue in every language, and a home in every clime?

If appeal be made to the rapidity of the early conquests of Christianity, the answer is:—"Oh, Mahometanism was equally rapid;" forgetting that the very point of difference is, that Christianity had no force to appeal to, and Mahometanism achieved its principal conquests by that and by nothing else.

If appeal be made to the *morality* of Christianity, the answer is, "Oh, every religion has its morality,

which more or less approximates to the truth." But what we want to know is, how the ethics of this religion came to *differ* from the ethics of other religions? how it came to take under its special patronage the *passive* virtues, the virtues man least loves; to make everything depend upon internal purity, and to set practical morality infinitely above ceremonial observances?

If the appeal be made to the wonderful compositions in which the religion of Christ is consigned to us, the answer is, "Oh, every religion has its sacred books." But the question is, have they exacted from the genius, learning, and culture of the most civilized nations and of the most various races, a millionth part of the homage which these books have done?

And so it is with many other topics of argument. The differences between Christianity and other religions are for the most part left unaccounted for, and ignored. If any man will fairly consider all the differences in the character, history, and effects of Christianity, as compared with religions which have undoubtedly been of human origin, he will then, and then only, appreciate the improbability of its being the work of man; and that inference will be further strengthened if he considers that, when man has innovated upon it, he has (as in the matter of persecution) naturally assimilated it to his own ordinary handiwork, thereby giving additional proof how little it was likely to come from him.

IV.

THE STORY OF JOHN HUSS.

THE story of John Huss, the great Bohemian Reformer, has been often told, and is sufficiently familiar to the student of ecclesiastical history. But it may be doubted whether it has been so well known to ordinary readers, either as it deserves to be, or as that of Luther unquestionably is. This is partly to be ascribed to the remoteness of the age in which he lived,—it is now just 450 years since his martyrdom; partly to the character of the reforms he aimed at, and which did not touch the great doctrinal abuses, the correction of which, after all, was an essential preliminary to any radical Reformation, such as the Church required, and Luther achieved; partly to the fact that the heroic effort he made was not *successful*, and that his memory has been clouded by the subsequent excesses of his followers; lastly, and above all perhaps, to the circumstance, that his name has

been lost in the more illustrious name of Luther,—in the blaze of whose glory this bright morning star of the Reformation has almost faded from our eyes. For these reasons it may be well to say a little respecting the principal incidents of his life and the more striking traits of his character, for the sake of the many who have not paid much, or, perhaps, any attention to the claims of the great Bohemian to the grateful homage and everlasting remembrance of mankind.

Nor ought any who love and revere the name of Luther, to be ignorant that it was probably due to Huss that Luther was able to achieve so much; nay, that he lived to achieve anything. We may say this, not merely because Huss was a pioneer in the same great work; that he shaped many of the stones, and hewed much of the timber, of that Temple he was not permitted to build; that he shook the outworks of the fortress which it was reserved for Luther to storm; not merely because Luther derived some lights, and still greater stimulus, at an early period of his career, from the history and writings of Huss, as is seen clearly in his letters, and in the allusions he made to him at the Leipsic Disputation;* not merely, I say,

* “When I studied at Erfurdt,” says Luther, in the edition of the letters of Huss (1537), “I found in the library of the convent, a book entitled *The Sermons of John Huss*. I had a great curiosity to know what doctrines that arch-heretic had propagated. My astonishment was incredible. I could not com-

for these reasons (in fact, all the "Reformers before the Reformation," as they have been well called, are entitled to that praise), but for a more special reason. In all likelihood, Huss was not simply the precursor of Luther, but literally paid down, in his martyrdom, the ransom of Luther's life. That violation of the imperial safe-conduct which, to the eternal shame of Emperor, Pope, Cardinals, and the whole Council of Constance, involved the death of Huss, was the very thing which probably saved the life of Luther at Worms. Vehemently was Charles V. urged to imitate the conduct of Sigismund, and violate, for the sake of the Church, the safe-conduct granted to Luther; strongly was he plied by the same casuistry, namely, that "no faith was to be kept with heretics;" but Charles replied that "he had no wish to blush like his predecessor Sigismund,"—in allusion to the story of Sigismund's having manifested so much weakness, when Huss alluded to the subject of his safe-conduct, at the Council of Constance. The scandal of that iniquitous transaction of the previous century was Luther's ægis at Worms, and hence he safely quitted that place which he had entered with such dauntless

prehend why they burnt so great a man, who explained the Scriptures with so much skill and gravity. . . . But as his name was held in such abhorrence that I imagined the sky would fall and the sun be darkened if I made honourable mention of him, I shut the book with no little indignation."

courage in defiance of so many omens of evil. Thus was Huss probably the saviour of Luther—

Dipped in his fellow's blood
The living bird went free.

The courage of Luther, indeed, was as great as though he too had died a martyr. During his whole progress to Worms, whither he went with such inflexible obstinacy against all the remonstrances of his friends and the muttered threats of his enemies, it is evident that he contemplated the too great likelihood of sharing the fate of Huss. The genius and maxims of ecclesiastical policy were unchanged; the terrors of Reformation were at least as strong, and the inheritors of the persecuting principles of Constance equally unscrupulous. He would assuredly have died if Charles V. had not been afraid of "blushing."

And as Huss deserves the veneration of posterity, scarcely more for what he did in the cause of Reformation, than for the spell which his name and fate threw around Luther, so his history itself is full of deepest and most tragical interest. In the long roll of martyrs there is hardly a victim whose fate awakens such unmingled admiration for the unflinching fortitude and constancy with which he adhered to what he deemed truth, and suffered for it; or which inspires such vivid, and, indeed, exquisitely painful sympathy, as we read the story. Exposed, single-handed, to the concentrated enmity of the whole Roman Church and

Hierarchy, as embodied in the cruel Council of Constance,—to Pope and Cardinals, Emperor and Princes ; feeling that the whole might of prescription, both of the present and the past, was against him ; doubtless often tempted to ask himself, as Luther sometimes did, and as Huss was still more likely to do in that earlier and darker age, “whether it was possible that he alone should be right, and all the rest of the world wrong ;” troubled with those tremors of heart which such a possibility could not but awaken, he yet held on his way—though darker and darker at every step—undaunted. Such was the mastery of truth over him, so gloriously imperious was conscience, so profound his reverence for Scripture, so resolute was he, like Luther, to yield obedience to that alone, that he was proof alike against injury and ignominy, insult and flattery, promises and threats, and at last sealed his testimony by enduring death in the most appalling of all shapes. This last proof of heroism, indeed, many men have given, both before and after him. But very few, if any, ever passed to martyrdom through such an ordeal of “cruel mockings” and wrongs, with so majestic a patience as he did. Huss before the Council of Constance is one of the sublimest pictures in the whole gallery of history.

It is not my intention to give a full account of his life ; but a slight sketch of its principal events is

necessary for comprehending the significance of the closing scenes of it. It will not occupy much space, for the records of his early years are unusually meagre.

He was born about 1370, at Hassinetz, a village of Bohemia, not far from Prague. Huss is the Bohemian name for a "goose," and this more than once furnishes both Huss and his enemies with some rather clumsy pleasantry. It is hard to say whether he or they be more ponderously witty in availing themselves of it; he for the enhancement of his humility, and they as a term of reproach. He was born of lowly but honest parents, who seem to have done all they could for his education.

He was first sent to the school of his native village, and afterwards to another of somewhat higher order, in a neighbouring town. Even as a child he was noted for the acuteness and vigour of his intellect, and made good in his youth all the promise of his boyhood. He was sent to the University of Prague at an early age; and in the dearth of authentic details, writers have garnished this event with some idle traditions. There is an absurd story, for example, which L'Enfant gravely relates from an old author, that "when his mother took him to Prague to enter him at the university, she took a goose and a cake with her as a present to the Rector, and that by chance the goose flew away,—an accident which the poor woman looked upon as an evil omen, and fell down

on her knees to recommend her son to the Divine Protection" (the tutelary "goose," we may suppose, having left its namesake), "and went on her way with great heaviness of heart, to think that half her oblation to the Rector was gone."

"He lived in times," says the same historian, "that were very favourable to the improvement of his various talents,"—a proposition which it is somewhat difficult to accede to, considering that the shadow of the "dark ages" still lay upon them, and the *crepusculum* of a better time was but just beginning to glimmer. But it may be conceded (and this is probably what is meant), that it was a period of literary and intellectual activity as *compared* with the preceding centuries; and his proximity to Prague certainly insured Huss the advantages of one of the first universities in Europe.

Of his academic career we know little or nothing, except that it was honourable and successful. Certain dates preserved in the ancient memoir of him, by an unknown author, prefixed to the folio edition of his works, inform us that in 1393 he became M.A. and B.D.; three years after was ordained priest, and began to preach; in 1400 was appointed to that function in the chapel of Bethlehem, at Prague, where he became the favourite court preacher of Sophia, the Queen of Wenceslaus. In 1401, he was elected Dean of the Faculty of Divinity and Confessor to the Queen; and some time after, Rector of the University.

In 1405 he had already become famous for his sermons preached in *his native tongue* at Bethlehem, in which he insisted on forgotten evangelical verities, and inveighed energetically against the corruptions of the Church and the vices of the clergy. It was inevitable that this should expose him to the hatred of the Church. He had been equally vehement, it is true, against the vices of the laity; but King Wenceslaus sarcastically told the clergy, it was only when he began to attack similar vices in the Church that they talked of his heresies.

He also gave much offence to a large portion of the Bohemian clergy by the part he took in the great Papal Schism; strongly advocating the rejection of the claims of Gregory XII.

But his "sermons" were not the only cause of the fierce hatred which followed him from this time to his death. There were other reasons for the odium attached to him, perhaps as potent, or nearly as potent, as any of his imputed religious errors, though they had nothing to do with religion. Enthusiastically beloved by a large portion of his countrymen, there was of course always a large part of the Romish Church, who, on account of his reforming propensities, were bitterly opposed to him; but, had he had no other enemies, and had it been possible for him to evade the summons to Constance, it is probable he might have remained as safe in Bohemia as Luther in

Saxony under the protection of Frederick. Of course, he had the dominant church party *out* of Bohemia also against him ; but their hatred was greatly strengthened by the extraneous causes to which we have just adverted, and which it is necessary to bear in mind in order to understand his true position. The first is, the part he took in asserting, against the Germans, certain rights of his countrymen to a just share in the government of the University of Prague, and by which he exposed himself to the hatred of Germany. The remembrance of that quarrel, in which the Germans were worsted (and as they alleged, perhaps truly), through the instrumentality of Huss, inspired them with a lifelong hatred of him. Having such important results, the quarrel may justify a few words of explanation.

The University of Prague was founded in the year 1347, by the Emperor Charles IV. It was modelled on the statutes of the universities of chief note in Europe, as those of Paris and Bologna, where, in questions involving university honours and emoluments, three votes were given to the native, and one vote to the foreign, members. But as, during the infancy of the University of Prague, there was a much larger number of students from various parts of the Germanic Empire than from Bohemia, this proportion was reversed. The consequence was that the university honours and rewards were almost mono-

polished by the Germans ; and, as the native students increased in numbers, this naturally occasioned much chagrin and discontent. They sought to redress this wrong, and were successful,—principally it is said through the efforts of Huss and Jerome of Prague. Huss admitted that the provisional management was reasonable enough, so long as the foreign element in the university was largely preponderant. But when that was no longer the case, he strenuously urged that the proportion of the votes should be reversed : “ It is just,” said he, “ that we should have three votes, and that you Germans should be content with one.” The Germans, however, as might be expected, were by no means “ content.” On the contrary, so exasperated were they, that they agreed, should the alteration take place, they would leave the university *en masse* ; and, it is further said, decreed that if any were obstinate enough to refuse taking a part in this *exodus*, he should expiate his guilt by the loss of two of his fingers ; a somewhat curious illustration of the poet’s assertion, of the humanising effect of letters :

“ *Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores nec sinit esse feros.*”

It was a much better proof of the strength of national hatred.

Be this as it may, the Germans (who doubtless thought, from their numbers, that their secession would leave the university as “ frightful a solitude ” as

Tertullian says the Roman Empire would have been if all the Christians had gone out of it), took their departure. And if their numbers had been as great as some accounts make them, no doubt the *vacuum* would have been all but complete. But the figures generally given are clearly fabulous, as is indicated by the enormous differences in the accounts of different writers. As reported in *L'Enfant*, one writer says the students were 44,000, which is about as probable as that there were at one time 30,000 students at Oxford. Another, a little more modestly, says 40,000; a third computes the roll at 36,000; a fourth comes down to 24,000; Æneas Sylvius reduces it to 5000, which Count Krasinski thinks may have been the truth, though he hardly assigns any sufficient reason for preferring it to that of other writers who fixed it at 2000! In other words, we know little about the matter.

The secession of the foreign students took place in 1409, and led to the establishment of the University of Leipsic.

The seceding Germans spread and kept alive among their countrymen, a vivid and lasting hatred of Huss, which formed an appreciable element in the grand total of enmities combined against him in the Council of Constance.

There was probably also another adventitious cause of hostility to Huss. He was in philosophy a "Realist." Now though the disputes between the

Realists and their opponents, the Nominalists, were equally unintelligible and interminable, and turned upon refinements of abstraction so extremely subtle that one would imagine they could never stir in the human bosom the faintest breath of passion, they had often roused the combatants on both sides to the most frenzied fury. Anything, indeed, may serve for that. The wind, impalpable though it be, can fan flames fast enough. Whatever men can wrangle about, be it the idlest phantasm of the most crazy dreamer, *that* they can also be angry and fight about; and indeed often with an energy of passion in inverse proportion to the importance or clearness of the point in dispute. Accordingly, these two metaphysical sects often sought to decide by blows what they could not decide by reason: and shed blood and even sacrificed lives for the question, whether an abstract name (as *man*, for example) represented any one man in particular, or man in general! In short, they made more than one university of Europe a sort of metaphysical Donnybrook, where the combatants fought with about as intelligent understanding of what they were fighting for, and also with as much passion and obstinacy, as any Irish "factions" whatsoever. It has been surmised, therefore, that the fact that Huss was a Realist, and consequently hated by the opposite faction of the Nominalists, made him obnoxious to many of his judges at Constance.

It is certainly not a little mournful, as well as curious, that in this and other cases, the fortunes of Truth and Humanity may often be imperilled by considerations which have nothing in the world to do with either the one or the other ; that a man like John Huss may be made a martyr for religion, in a great measure because national animosities have set two communities by the ears, and opposite sects are blindly engaged in a night-battle about an incomprehensible dogma of metaphysics.*

Another fact, which undoubtedly had much more to do with his fate, as really exercising a powerful influence over his theological opinions and exposing him to a double measure of the rancour of Rome, was his attachment to the writings of Wickliffe. It is curious to think, that from the remote insular seclusion of our country went forth the influences which gave the chief impulse to the Bohemian Reformer. It makes good the quaint words of Fuller in his "Church History of England," when speaking of the posthumous dishonour done to Wickliffe's ashes :—"They were cast into the Swift, a neighbouring brook, running hard by. Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the

* One subtle question, particularly respecting Transubstantiation, seems to have been designed to entrap Huss through his Realist creed. It challenged him to maintain, in a subtle dilemma, the "*Universal à parte Rei*," and had like to have given him some trouble !—*L'Enfant*, vol. i. p. 324.

narrow seas, then into the Main Ocean. And thus the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

There was little chance, however, of any particle of his dust reaching the country of Huss by this route, in the lack of that "seaport on the coast of Bohemia," which Shakspeare has created there in spite of geography. But in truth it seemed as little likely that any portion of his *doctrine* should be conveyed thither. Yet so it was ; and by one of those familiar methods by which the Providence of God in the course of its ordinary working easily brings the strangest things to pass, and binds the most distant things together. Our Richard the Second's Queen was Anne of Bohemia, daughter of the Emperor Charles IV. After her husband's death she returned to her native land, and some of her retinue took Wickliffe's writings with them. Further, it is said, certain Bohemians had sojourned for some time at Oxford, among whom was Jerome of Prague : while others add, that two English Lollards found their way to Prague, and were entertained for some time at the house of John Huss, who thus got to know the works of Wickliffe. However that may be, and whatever the mode, it is certain that he became well acquainted with several of those works, and that they produced a strong effect on his opinions. At his chapel of Bethlehem, he often spoke in terms of eulogy of the great English Reformer, and

prayed that when he died his soul might be with that of Wickliffe, wheresoever that might be !

There is a tradition that the two English disciples of Wickliffe asked Huss to allow them to paint the hall of his house, and that on his granting the request they depicted, on one side, Christ's lowly entry into Jerusalem, and on the other, in strong contrast with it, a splendid procession of the Pope and his cardinals, in all the pomp and glitter of pontifical pageantry. It is said these pictures excited much curiosity ; that many came to see them, and went away divided in opinion about their *propriety*. But the generality of ecclesiastics understood the pictorial writing of these Wickliffite Mexicans too well, and, if we may trust report, the pictures created so much scandal that the Englishmen were compelled to quit Prague.

Whatever the truth of these traditions, it is certain that Wickliffe's writings were extensively circulated at Prague at this time, as we shall presently see from the crusade of the Archbishop of Prague against them. Cochleus tells us that many of the "manuscripts were beautifully written and splendidly embossed and bound—*bullis aureis tegumentisque preciosis ornata.*" This not only shows the justice of Krasinski's remark, that they had been in the possession of wealthy and therefore influential persons ; it also shows how great value was put upon jewels which were enshrined in such costly caskets. Several of the Reformer's

writings Huss himself translated into his native tongue, and took measures to circulate them widely in Bohemia and Moravia.

By such proceedings, and especially by his bold invectives against the enormous corruptions of the Church, Huss had created a considerable party throughout Bohemia intensely zealous for a Reformation, and disposed to accept him as their leader; not a little influenced, doubtless, by the fact that he had been the champion of their national rights in the great University quarrel, a circumstance which, though it might operate against him out of Bohemia, vastly strengthened his position within it.

And now things were ripe for a conflict between Huss and the Church. In 1410 the Archbishop of Prague obtained a bull from the Pope (Alexander V.), authorising him to extirpate heresy in Bohemia, and as a means to that end, to burn the writings of Wickliffe wherever they could be found, and to prohibit preaching except in certain specified buildings, from which "chapels" were excluded, and therefore (which was doubtless the real object), the chapel of Bethlehem, where Huss preached. After much opposition to the bull, it was at last proclaimed.

On March 9th, 1410, Huss was cited before the Archbishop's Court on the charge of heresy. When he, and others similarly accused of possessing portions of the writings of Wickliffe, asked the Archbishop

what part of the Reformer's writings were heretical? they were told that "*all* the writings of that arch-heretic were heretical," and accordingly the Archbishop burnt them wherever he could lay hands on them. At the same time he forbade all preaching in "chapels," and thus gagged Huss. The University of Prague protested, but for the present protested in vain, against the violent measures of the Archbishop.

The ferment spread throughout Bohemia, and the country was divided into two great parties, which in many places threatened, and indeed broke, the public peace. This led to a series of struggles between King Wenceslaus and the refractory Archbishop, into which we have not space to enter, but which are amongst not the least memorable or instructive of the contests between the temporal and the spiritual powers during the middle ages. We can only notice them so far as they severally bear on the fate of Huss. The King, indolent and addicted to pleasure, would have cared, it is said, very little about the dispute, if the disputants would but have left him alone; but if it went on to civil war, he felt that he could not be left alone. Huss also was a favourite with his Queen, and to a certain extent with himself. He ordered the Archbishop to indemnify the folks whose books he had so summarily burnt. The prelate refused; and his estates were sequestered.

Soon after, a papal embassy arrived at Prague to

announce the election of the infamous John XXIII., afterwards deposed by the Council of Constance. The King thought it was a good opportunity to endeavour to obtain the repeal of the "bull" of John's predecessor, and to secure the restitution of the privileges of the chapel of Bethlehem. But the astute Archbishop sent back, with the embassy, emissaries of his own, who defeated the King's object. They procured the Pope's sanction of the Archbishop's proceedings, and a citation for Huss to appear at Rome to plead to the charges of heresy against him. The King, declaring that Huss could not go "without peril of his life," which no doubt the Pope and Archbishop knew as well as he, or even better, refused to let him go. The Pope rejoined that the appearance of Huss was indispensable, and that the judges to try his cause were already appointed. In short, the banquet was all prepared, and the Pope seemed to say, "Come, for all things are now ready." Thus backed by the papal authority, the Archbishop reiterated the excommunication of Huss, and claimed that his own estates should be restored; the King would not comply with the last, and many of the clergy refused to read out the first. Higher and higher soared hawk and falcon, in the hope to gain a vantage point for striking. The Archbishop, nothing daunted, laid the terrors of interdict on Prague. The King retorted by measures equally vigorous, banished many of the clergy who

had been conspicuously busy in the execution of the Archbishop's orders; seized (worse heresy than all!) the treasures of the Chapter of Prague, and made the Estates of the Realm pass a law by which it was forbidden to carry certain causes before the ecclesiastical courts. These measures of retaliation touched what was more precious than doctrine, and finished for the present the contest between the temporal and spiritual powers; in which the victory lay with the former. The Archbishop agreed to submit the controversy to a court of arbitration, which, on 3rd of July, 1411, decided that the Archbishop was "to submit to the King, to revoke his interdict, to cancel the proceedings he had commenced against heresy, and to send to Rome a declaration that in Bohemia there was *no* heresy." On the other hand, if the Archbishop complied, the King was to restore his estates, and was to bind himself to punish all heresies,—an easy task, since the Archbishop was to declare at the same time that in Bohemia there were none! And so ended this notable passage of arms between the King and his refractory priest.

As the most illustrious of the successors of John Huss (who really achieved in the cause of Reformation what Huss only attempted, and far more) miraculously escaped martyrdom, so it is not a little remarkable that Huss's most illustrious predecessor, Wick-

liffe, also escaped it. Both he and Luther died in their beds, contrary to all human probability. And so perhaps might Huss, could he have remained in Bohemia, amidst the tens of thousands who loved, and were ever ready to rally round him. He refused, like Luther and Wickliffe, to obey the citation to appear at Rome ; no doubt feeling, as they did, that it was not "good for the health" of a Reformer to go there. Instinct told them that, go where they might, to London, or Constance, or Worms, they had better not repair to Rome. Perhaps they felt like the fox in the fable, who declined the invitation to the lion's den, inasmuch as he had observed that the only footsteps in its vicinity were *towards* it, and none *from* it : *nulla vestigia retrorsum*. If Huss could, in like manner, have escaped the invitation to Constance,—if he had not severed himself from the multitudes of zealous and faithful friends among his compatriots,—he might have remained as safe in their protection as Luther under that of the Elector of Saxony. Luther indeed ran great risks in going to Worms, but still it was within the "fatherland," and he was surrounded by "troops of friends," not to repeat that the very name and fate of Huss probably proved a shield.

Huss has been sometimes blamed for his rashness in going to Constance. But, as L'Enfant has shown in his History of the Council, he had little choice in the matter. When he refused to go to Rome, he

appealed to a general Council, and pledged himself to appear before it and abide by it; he went not only with the consent of the King of Bohemia, but by his command; and, though like Luther on the way to Worms, he was not without forebodings and misgivings, he yet seemed to be amply fortified by the imperial safe-conduct with which he was to be furnished. Perhaps we may also say, with Waddington, that he felt not only an "intense conviction of the truth of his doctrines," but confidence also "in the integrity of the Council." He certainly seems to have hoped that he might at least be able to disabuse it of its impressions against him, and to reply satisfactorily to the charge of heresy. But though hoping the best, he was prepared for the worst, as is seen in that almost prophetic letter of farewell to his friends, written just before his departure for Constance, in which he touchingly and forebodingly says, "Perhaps you will never see me at Prague any more."

It was on the 11th of October, 1414, that Huss commenced his journey to Constance: all through Bohemia, as was to be expected, his progress was a series of ovations. Nor was he unfavourably received even in Germany itself. At Nuremburg especially, the most flattering attentions were paid him, and he was conducted into the town by a vast concourse of people. He arrived at Constance, November 2nd, 1414. He was still without his safe-conduct; but it

came the next day, and was delivered by one of the three Bohemian nobles to whose care King Wenceslaus had committed him. It was couched in the most absolute and unequivocal terms.* No sooner had he arrived in Constance than those intrigues and machinations began which had his destruction for their object, and which were too fatally successful. His enemies, many of them from the party opposed to him in Bohemia, inflamed the minds of the people, spread abroad all sorts of accusations (most of them wholly false), and brought such pressure to bear on the Cardinals—only too willing doubtless to be pressed—that they “promised he should never be set at liberty.” His friend, John de Chlum, was summoned to surrender Huss. That noble Bohemian, indignant at this flagrant attempt to elude or infringe the safe-conduct, appealed to the Pope. The Pope was very polite; declared he had nothing to say against Huss, but that he could not control the Cardinals. De Chlum showed the safe-conduct to all the German

* It may be seen at large in *L'Enfant*, vol. i., p. 61. One sentence will suffice :

“Whom we have taken into our protection and safeguard, and into that of the empire, desiring you, when he comes among you, to receive him well and entertain him kindly, furnishing him with all necessaries for his despatch and security, whether he goes by land or water, without taking anything either from him or his, at coming in or going out, for any sort of duties whatsoever; and to let him freely and securely pass, sojourn, stop, and repass, for the honour and respect of His Imperial Majesty.”

princes, and to the magistrates of Constance, but without effect. John Huss was put under arrest, and after being confined for a week in the house of one of the Canons of Constance, was consigned on the 6th of December to a dungeon under ground in the Dominican convent. On the news of his imprisonment, the Emperor, still capable of shame at being compelled to palter with his word, and at the insolence of the lieges who thus set his commands at nought, ordered his instant release. The Council paid no more attention to the order than to the expostulations of John de Chlum. On his arrival at Constance, finding he had not been obeyed, he threatened to leave the Council to itself, and actually set forth. Some of the Cardinals rode after him, overtook him, and to his own eternal shame so successfully plied him with their diabolical casuistry,—the chief articles of which were “That a General Council could deal with a heretic at its pleasure,” and that “No man was bound to keep faith with heretics,”—that they persuaded him, January 1st, 1415, to seal his infamy by giving his consent that the Council should take its course without impediment from him.

Forty-four articles of accusation, all charging Huss with teaching doctrines contrary to those of the Church, were presented. The greater part of these he clearly showed were false ; others, misrepresentations or exaggerations of his real opinions ; and that the

rest were not *heresies* at all, inasmuch as they had never been condemned by Pope or General Council, and were in harmony both with Scripture and reason. But there was one heresy of heresies of which Huss was guilty, which would have made orthodoxy itself heterodox. He did not acknowledge the Pope and the Cardinals, even with the Council to boot, to constitute the Church; and like Luther in the next century, appealed to the Scripture as the ultimate and supreme authority in matters of faith. He accordingly refused throughout the entire struggle to abandon any opinion unless he was confronted by arguments drawn from Holy Writ. There is no doubt that while he held many opinions and practices opposed to the current superstitions, his chief offence was the unsparing and bitter invectives which he had fulminated from the pulpit of Bethlehem and elsewhere, against the corruptions of the Church, and the vices of the Clergy. While they talked of heresy, this was in truth his real heresy.

Unconditional submission to the decisions of the Council was demanded of Huss, whether he believed them true or not. A curious, and almost incredible, instance of the implicit faith sometimes demanded of the individual conscience in those days is given in one of the letters of Huss, wherein he mentions among many other visits made to him in prison, with the view of entrapping, cajoling, or terrifying him into sub-

mission, that of a "certain doctor" who tried his rhetoric on this wise: "He told me," says Huss, "that, whatever I did, I ought to submit to the Council; and added, 'If the Council were to say that you have only one eye, while in fact you have two, you ought to confess with the Council that so the matter is.' To whom I said, 'Even if the whole world should tell me so, as long as I have my senses, I could not say this without doing violence to my conscience.' And after some more talk, he gave up the point, and acknowledged that he had not given a very good illustration."

On his arrest, he had demanded "the privilege of a public advocate,"—aid the more necessary, as his bodily infirmities, cruelly aggravated by his imprisonment, made him very unequal to the task imposed upon him. This most reasonable demand was refused. A strong disposition was also evinced to deprive him altogether of the advantage of a public trial, but this was found to be more than even the iniquity of the Council could compass.

Huss was brought before the Council three times; namely, on the 5th, 7th, and 8th of June, 1415, and was each time treated with the grossest injustice and cruelty. On the first occasion, the MS. of his treatise on the "Church" was presented to him, and he was asked whether the opinions contained in it were his? Huss avowed them, and his readiness to

defend them ; but also his readiness to retract everything which should be proved contrary to Scripture. Here he distinctly anticipates the Lutheran dilemma propounded at Worms. He was met by the no doubt sincere outcry, that the question was not what the Scriptures said, but whether he would retract doctrines which the Church, as represented by the Council, declared to be erroneous. Huss then began to make a confession of his faith. His confession was not wanted, he was told ; but simply that he should answer to the questions put to him, of which, however, that one question just mentioned, was the principal, and admitted of but one answer. He attempted once more to enter upon an explanation and defence of his opinions, but was met with rude shouts of derision ; and the tumult became so great that Huss was compelled to say (and it was the only thing like rebuke which all his wrongs extorted from him), that “ he had expected more courtesy and moderation from such an assembly.” Nevertheless, he defended himself with so much address that he demolished the first charge against him. But fighting thus single-handed (for, as already said, he had been denied an advocate), and in so mortal a struggle, it is no wonder that his strength failed ; he was conducted, exhausted and fainting, to his prison. One day of respite was granted to him, when he was again to be brought into the arena like the early martyrs, to face “ the

lions," or as St. Paul might have said, "to fight with wild beasts at Ephesus," if indeed "lions" and "wild beasts" will pardon the injustice done them by so degrading a comparison.

On the 7th he was accused of holding opinions contrary to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, that old and approved test of orthodoxy, and man-trap for catching heretics; that grim Moloch of superstition, which brought more of the Reformers to the stake than all their other heterodoxies put together. Huss easily refuted this charge, as in fact he never dreamed of questioning this doctrine, any more than did Luther when he began to preach against Indulgences. Other charges were brought forward, of which Huss demanded the proof. Instead of giving it, the Council pressed him with the only alternative,—absolute submission to its decrees. On this day, the Emperor Sigismund consummated his own shame, by declaring that though he had granted Huss a safe-conduct, yet being now informed by the Fathers of the Council that such a document given to a heretic was, *ipso facto*, null and void, he would no longer charge himself with his safety. Well might Huss say with David and with Strafford, "Put not your trust in princes." From that moment he saw his fate; but with that same beautiful patience for which he was distinguished, he began to express his thanks to the Emperor for the protection that had hitherto been granted him.

The last and final hearing, was on June the 8th. The charges were now more specially those on which (as already said) his "heresies" really depended; namely, the opinions he had so often expressed at Prague, touching the Pope and Cardinals, and the invectives in which he had indulged against the vices of the Clergy. He could not deny these charges, and if these could make him guilty, he could not deny his guilt. He might indeed have been wrung to apologise for occasional needless intemperance of language, but he could not admit that his allegations were false. The one alternative was once more put before him, of unconditional submission to the Council, or to be condemned as a heretic. He in vain implored once more that he might enter into a full exposition of his opinions. He was told that he must retract and abjure the doctrines contained in the forty-four articles, and swear to believe and teach the contrary. Huss then gave the noble answer, "that he could not abjure those doctrines which he had never affirmed, and as to others which he had, he would not deny the truth against his conscience, until their falsehood was clearly proved to him." Here again he was pleading, as Luther pleaded, that nothing can justify a man's saying anything against his conscience.

In vain he was admonished; in vain all sorts of menace and blandishment were exhausted upon him in turn. He was inflexible; his truly adamantine

temper would neither bend nor break. He was taken back to his prison, and as he left the Council, told them, "God must judge between him and them."

At this last appearance before the Council, finding himself browbeaten and bullied on all hands, and utterly hopeless of obtaining a hearing in reply to the charges made against him, Huss at last contented himself with reiterating what he had on a previous occasion urged, "a solemn appeal to Christ against the Council." This of course moved only the scorn and derision of this Christian assembly; on which he renewed and justified it. "Behold," he said, "O Christ, how thy Council condemns what Thou hast prescribed and practised. Yes," he continued, turning to the Council, "I have maintained, and still maintain, that there can be no surer appeal than to Jesus Christ; for He can be neither corrupted by bribes, nor deceived by false witnesses, nor cozened by any artifice."

He remained yet a month in his dungeon, and during that time various formulæ of abjuration were proposed to him. Several Cardinals visited him, and plied him with promises and threats by turns. It was still in vain, and on the 1st of July Huss sent to the Council his final resolution, that he neither could nor would abjure any of his opinions until his errors were demonstrated from the Scriptures. His execution was fixed for the 6th of July. But before that hour

arrived one other trial, prolonged and ignominious almost beyond example, awaited him ; for every ingredient that could add bitterness to that cup was infused into it. We allude to the public ceremony of his formal degradation. It is not possible to read the account of that scene without wondering at the majestic patience of the man, or without horror and indignation against the perpetrators of the iniquity, and at the system which made such things possible. The only thing that at all mitigates the feeling is contempt for many of the childish forms of spiteful mummary in which their malice embodied itself. He was commanded to assume the priestly vestments ; he obeyed. He then ascended a lofty scaffold, prepared for the occasion, and made that remarkable and noble confession to the people : “ The Bishops bid me confess that I am in error. If I could comply, with only the loss of the honour of a mortal man, they might perhaps have persuaded me to yield to them. But I stand here, face to face with Almighty God, and I cannot do this without dishonour to Him or without the stings of my own conscience. . . . How could I lift my eyes to Heaven, how face those whom I have taught, if I were thus to act ? Am I to cast into doubt so many souls by my example ? ”

He was interrupted, and commanded to descend from the scaffold. The several priestly vestments were then successively taken from him by as many

bishops, each of whom, as he took his part of the holy finery (too holy for John Huss to wear), addressed the poor victim by some too characteristic speech of orthodox irony or malice. The one who took the chalice from him out-heroded the rest: "O thou accursed Judas," said he, "because thou hast abandoned the council of peace, and conspired with the Jews, we take from thee this cup of salvation." Huss undauntedly replied, "But I trust in God the Father of all, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, for whose name's sake I am suffering all these things, that He will not take from me the cup of *His* salvation. On the contrary, I have a firm persuasion that I shall drink it to-day in His kingdom." At length came the obliteration of the tonsure, and how to manage this,—that is (as one may say), to shave a man already shaved, or rather to unshave him,—not a little puzzled these sacerdotal barbers. One proposed this, and another that. Huss quietly said to the Emperor, "Strange, that though they are all equally cruel, they cannot agree even in their cruelty!" At last they decided (it is said, but it is to be hoped falsely), to cut with scissors a portion of the scalp. They had now, as they deemed, deprived him of all ecclesiastic symbols of honour and privilege, and nothing remained but to hand him over to the secular arm; but their childish spite suddenly recollected that one thing was still wanting. A large paper cap, painted with

grotesque figures of devils, and inscribed with the word "HÆRESIARCHA," was placed on his head. When Huss saw it he said, "Our Lord wore a crown of thorns for my sake, why should not I wear this light, though ignominious cap for His?" The bishops in putting it on said, "We deliver thy body to the flames, and thy soul to the devil." Huss, lifting his eyes, replied, "Into thy hands, O Jesus Christ, I commend my soul which thou hast redeemed."

After this, he was led to the place of execution, just beyond the gate of Gottlieben, where carcases were usually flayed, and where much carrion had been recently strewn about, in order to add to the ignominy of the punishment. On his way, Huss had seen his more immortal part,—his books,—already burning. It only moved a smile, perhaps, at the childishness, perhaps at the futility, of the malice of his enemies. On arriving at the pile, his countenance, we are told, lighted up with animation. With a loud and clear voice he recited the 31st, and 81st Psalms, and prayed for some time. After one more vain attempt to extract a retraction from him, the fire was lighted. The fuel had only been piled up to his knees, and when burnt down, the upper part of his body was found unconsumed, and hanging to the stake by the chain; the flames were again kindled, and the heart of the refractory heretic having been torn from his body, and beaten and broken with clubs, was sepa-

rately burnt. But happily, of this supplementary martyrdom, Huss knew nothing. He seems to have been suffocated, rather than burnt, shortly after the fire was kindled, and just after he had uttered with a loud voice his last words, "Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me !"

The ashes were carefully collected and cast into the Rhine, whence (as Fuller said of those of Wickliffe, cast into the Avon) they have been carried into the "main ocean," and so are an "emblem of his doctrine, diffused throughout the world."

As the voluminous annals of martyrdom scarcely present us with any scene that reminds us more strongly of our blessed Lord in the hall of Pilate and amidst the soldiers of Herod : so, there is none in which the example of the great Master has been more perfectly copied by the disciple. The patience, dignity, and fortitude of a Christian were marvelously displayed in the whole deportment of the martyr. He "partook of the sufferings of Christ," and "the glory of Christ rested on him." It was something wonderful, that, as he was of too high and hardy a spirit to quail under the accumulated wrongs and cruelties of his persecutors, this very spirit did not betray him into momentary passion or irritation : that after being so fiercely chased he did not at last turn on the hunters, and resent, with unseemly defiance, the insufferable indignities heaped upon him.

Luther would certainly have raged like a lion in the toils ; Huss was led as “ a lamb to the slaughter.”

But this is only half his praise ; he was inflexible as he was gentle. Neither the open violence of the Council, nor the artful interrogatories with which he was plied in prison ; neither threats and intimidations, nor promises and cajolery ; nor, what was hardest to resist of all, the earnest importunities of friendly voices, could warp his steadfast spirit. And this inflexibility, conjoined with such meekness and patience, stamp the character and conduct of Huss with a moral sublimity which the world has rarely seen paralleled. Even the page of *L'Enfant*, the copious chronicler of the Council of Constance, one of the most honest and laborious, but also one of the dullest, of historians, lights up with a glimmer of animation, and is ruffled with something like energy and pathos, when he comes to depict the closing scenes of the life of the great Bohemian Reformer.*

* One of the most touching and noble appeals made to the Reformer is that of John de Chlum ; an appeal which, though it must have cost Huss a pang to part with such a friend, must have sounded in his ears, had he needed such a stimulus, like a trumpet. When every hope was lost, and De Chlum was about to separate from the martyr for the last time, he addressed him in these words :—

“ My beloved Master,—I am unlettered, and consequently unfit to counsel one so enlightened as you. Nevertheless, if you are secretly conscious of any one of those errors which have been publicly imputed to you, I do entreat you not to feel any shame in retracting it ; but if, on the contrary, you are convinced of

Thus perished this man, after as terrible and prolonged a fight with the "principalities, and powers of this world," close leagued with those of "darkness," as ever was fought by martyr or confessor ;—the more terrible that it was fought by him singlehanded, for he was the first of the long and illustrious procession of martyrs of Reformation who were destined, with "the unresistable might of weakness" (as Milton has it), "to shake the Powers of Darkness, and scorn the fiery rage of the Old Red Dragon." Huss trod his dark path alone, unsupported by the example of that "cloud of witnesses" which gave courage to his successors : by himself was he to hush the doubts which could not but assail any man who undertook to assert his opinions against the voice of all prescription, armed with all power ; and this, too, amidst imprisonment, sickness, "cruel mockings," and every form of wrong. He drank the cup of martyrdom drop by drop, with every conceivable ingredient of bitterness in it ; and the entire tragedy involved, in all probability, a sum of suffering of which, after all, the last brief fiery agony was the least part. To the deep shadows which often

your innocence, I am so far from advising you to say anything against your conscience, that I exhort you rather to endure every form of torture than to renounce anything that you hold to be true." Huss replied with tears, that God was his witness, how ready he had ever been, and still was, to retract on oath, and with his whole heart, from the moment he should be convicted of any error *by evidence from Holy Scripture.*

rested on his soul, amidst his prison solitude, there are some touching allusions in his letters ; he there speaks of the dark forebodings which troubled him, and of the terrible dreams which sometimes haunted his sleep.*

As we read the tragic story, it is impossible not to feel our indignation kindle against the corrupt Church which burned him, or refrain from murmuring with those souls beneath the altar, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

While it is true that John Huss was a pioneer of the Reformation, it is also true that the Reformation he sought was not of doctrine so much as of morals and of government. He pleaded, quite justly, that he was not guilty of the heresies of which his enemies accused him : he was, as already said, burned for very different reasons. He was orthodox on transubstantiation, believed in the intercession of saints, worshipped the Virgin Mother, had no doubts about purgatory and prayers for the dead ; and, though he thought the cup ought to be given to the laity, did not make even that (which was the bond and characteristic symbol of his followers) an essential point. In inveighing against the monstrous evils of the great Schism, against the

* Especially in letters xxiii., xxxii., *Huss, Oper.* In one, he speaks of a dream in which frightful serpents seemed to be crawling about him.

corruptions in the government of the Church, and the vices of her ministers, he had done little more than many others both before him and after him. Nay, at Constance itself almost equal freedom was used. But, as Waddington justly observes, the offence of Huss consisted in this—that he appealed to the “Bible,” rather than the “Church;” that the Bible, not the Church, was the source of his reforming zeal. It would have been well if the Reformation that Huss contemplated had included dogma; for there could be no effectual reformation without it. Hence chiefly it was that Luther’s was more durable and efficacious. Both reformers had their eyes first opened by those moral enormities which most readily struck the sense, and which were the *ne plus ultra* of the recession of the Church from Christian truth. Both spoke with almost equal vehemence against false miracles, indulgences, and the vices of the clergy. But Luther looked further, and saw deeper; and attacked, one after another, those corruptions of doctrine which were the secret roots of the evils in practice. And hence we may see how little force there is in the modern and too favourite notion, that dogma is of little or no consequence, or that one set of dogmas is nearly as good as another! Looking at men *in general*, as are their *convictions* (supposing these firm and sincere), such also will be their life, whether good or evil. The superstition which buries truth, and the scepticism which doubts

whether there be any, are in the end almost equally pernicious to the morals of mankind ; both alike tend to repress all that is noble and magnanimous in our nature. What we find true in politics, is certainly not less true in theology ; and we all know what sort of patriot and statesman *he* is likely to prove who believes that it matters not what party-badge he wears or what political creed he professes ; who doubts whether it be not wisest to let the world jog on as it will, and to acquiesce in any time-honoured abuse or inveterate corruption which it will give trouble and involve sacrifice to extirpate. But there is this difference in the two cases, that the world will tolerate in theology the character which it is too astute not to abhor in politics.

It is in vain, however, to blame Huss for not going deeper or further. He lived a century before Luther ; and neither he nor his contemporaries were prepared in the fifteenth century to receive or act upon views which were feasible only in the sixteenth. But to this high praise he is unquestionably entitled, that he asserted the very same maxim on which Luther justified his resistance at Worms ;—the absolute supremacy of conscience, unless its errors be demonstrated by clear proof from what both of them affirmed to be alone the ultimate authority in matters of faith,—the Scripture. Though much more than this is required for a full and consistent system of religious liberty, it was a large

instalment of it ; and for vindicating so much of the great charter of the "Rights of Conscience," and ratifying it with a martyr's seal, John Huss is entitled to be held in lasting and grateful remembrance.

It has been seen that Huss really penetrated very imperfectly into the evils of Popery. By some, however, the contrary would seem to be assumed ; for he has been represented, not only as the precursor but the prophet of the German Reformation ; and an appeal has been made to certain medals (supposed to have been struck contemporaneously with his death, or shortly after it), inscribed with a prediction that "after a hundred years his oppressors should answer to God and to him—*Centum revolutis annis Deo respondebitis et mihi.*"

L'Enfant has examined this matter with his usual fulness and fairness, and shown that there is no ground for supposing these medals to be anterior to the Lutheran Reformation, and that there is nothing in any of the acknowledged remains of Huss, to indicate that he pretended to anything more than merely mortal presages as to the future of the papacy. It is true there are expressions which show that he felt convinced that the evils of the Church were so enormous that a time of Reformation must soon come ; that a tree so rotten must fall. But they only prove that he saw what many a mind between Huss and Luther saw as clearly. Nor is it possible to read the many satires on

the clergy, current and popular during the middle ages, without being convinced that those who wrote and read them must have divined that a system, the corruptions of which were so notorious, so odious, and so *ridiculed*, could not be very long maintained. It was a probability on which any mind of more than moderate perspicacity might safely speculate; just as we may *now* confidently predict from the present symptoms and position of the Papacy, that it will, within a very short time, perhaps in a few brief years, be the subject of startling revolutions. There it stands, an anachronism in the world's history; with all its errors stereotyped; stationary amidst progress, and immutable amidst change; showing in the late Encyclical* that it does not in the slightest degree recede from aspirations and pretensions to which it is impossible to give effect; regarding all that passes around it with a smile of senile madness; the patron still, so far as it can or dare act upon them, of the very principles which led it to persecute Huss and Luther; the lion still, but an old lion, with teeth broken and claws pared; with the worst possible government of his own, and acting as a universal obstructive (wheresoever it has unchecked influence) to the progress of enlightenment and freedom; giving the world infinite plague, and occasioning perpetual difficulty and worry to Europe; with its subject nations more and more

* 1864.

divided as to the extent of their allegiance, and as to the measure of the faith to be reposed in its Decrees. On the other hand, it is nearly deserted by the secular supports which have so long upheld it, and is challenged to try whether it can keep itself from tumbling down. If the French Emperor had studied, for ten years together, how to involve it in difficulties, and perhaps Europe with it, he could not have thought of anything better than his somewhat enigmatical "Convention." Whether fairly carried out with all its appendant conditions, or not, it offers almost equally perilous alternatives to Rome ; and it is impossible for any man not to presage—as Huss and Luther could in their day—that a time of startling change is at hand.

If we could put faith in what most of us must always be very distrustful of,—the interpretation of *unfulfilled* prophecy, it would be difficult not to be startled by the singular coincidence that the *time* fixed by many interpreters (and some of them lived long ago), for the *dénouement* of the great papal drama synchronised, more or less exactly, with that fixed for carrying out the imperial Convention, namely, the year 1866 ; for surely it is not easy to imagine the Emperor Napoleon's having determined his policy by conjectural interpretations of the Apocalypse ! It is very certain, not only that some recent interpreters have fixed on that year as being a significant epoch for the

Papacy, but that Fleming, more than a hundred and fifty years ago, predicted that *either* 1848 or 1866, according as we read the prophetic year by the Julian calendar, or otherwise, would be thus significant. In point of fact, both periods (though "the end be not yet") have been of very great import to Rome,—the first as heralding the European Revolutions (and amongst them, that at Rome itself) which led to the occupation by the French ; and the second as signalised by the imperial Convention which is to terminate it. But, as just hinted, it is impossible not to distrust minute interpretations of *unfulfilled* prophecy. While we may hold with Bishop Butler, that it is impossible for any man who calmly compares the history of the world with the prophetic pages of the Bible, not to be struck with the general conformity between them ; and while we may well believe that, as the scroll of the future is read by the light of events, that impression will be strongly corroborated, it is difficult to imagine, from the very nature of prophecy (addressed as it is to a world governed by *moral* laws, and yet predicting events which are to admit of no possibility of being either accelerated or frustrated), that it can be otherwise than *conjecturally* interpreted. He who would pry too closely into unfulfilled prophecy, is like the too curious Athenian, who wished to know "what it was that the philosopher was carrying concealed under his cloak?" "I carry it there," was the reply, "for the

very purpose of concealing it." It is much the same with the enigmas of unfulfilled prophecy before the event gives us the key to them. And if we too importunately inquire as to the future, that may be said to us, which was said to those who asked the Saviour, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" "It is not for you," said he, "to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power."

Meantime, it does not require any great sagacity to believe that startling changes are coming upon that wonderful fabric which it took so many centuries to compact, and has already taken so many to disintegrate.

V.

SKETCH OF THE
LATE SAMUEL FLETCHER,

OF BROOMFIELD, NEAR MANCHESTER.

“A merchant man seeking goodly pearls.”—

Matth. xiii. 45.

IF the man who has bequeathed to hospitals or churches the hoards he could no longer use, deserves to be remembered, assuredly *he* ought not to be forgotten who, during his lifetime, has lavished as much on similar objects, though not in one lump. Indeed, the former has too often little claim to the gratitude of posterity ; for, could he have continued to enjoy his wealth, he would not have given it away. He gives it to the strong robber, Death, in no other sense than the traveller yields his purse to the highwayman. In any case, he who gives to charity only on his deathbed, may be said (to use old Fuller’s words) to be “rather liberal of that which is another man’s, than of his own ;” he but gives what he cannot himself longer possess, and, by retaining it to the last moment, seems to show that he would have kept it to

the period of Methuselah's longevity (or still longer) if he could.

And even where there is no reason to doubt the charitable feelings and purposes of a man who gives with "the dead hand," it may still be said that he has not only deferred the good he might have done, and forgotten the maxim, "*Bis dat qui cito dat*," but robbed himself of one of the sweetest rewards and most pleasant spectacles that wait on benevolence,—the recompense of conscious self-sacrifice for the good of others, and the sight of the happiness it has conferred.

Nor are these the only disadvantages of this mode of giving. No sympathy can be expressed by him who gives, no gratitude expressed by those who receive, the gifts of "the dead hand." They seem rather to fall from its involuntarily relaxing grasp than to be spontaneously surrendered. Those from the "living" hand are warmed with its life. They are accompanied with looks of love, and tones and tears of pity, scarcely less precious to the receivers than the gifts themselves.

The contrast between the living John Howard, bending over the captives in the dungeon, with the soul of compassion in his eyes and on his lips, and the same John Howard in a marble effigy, shadows forth the difference between the "living" and the "dead" hand; and if he who gives to charity what he can no

longer enjoy, does well, he who gives it in his lifetime (supposing he can equally well afford it), does better.

The late Samuel Fletcher, Esq., of Broomfield, near Manchester—one of the “merchant princes” of that great city—whose name can be strange to few of those who direct the great religious and philanthropic organisations of our day, was one of those men whose delight it is to be their own almoners; and, certainly, if the preceding observations be correct, he has as strong claims to a niche in the memories of his countrymen as those who have made themselves conspicuous by leaving a splendid fortune to endow a hospital or a college, or by any similar act of a posthumous charity. It is well known to the writer of these pages that during his long and useful life, his benefactions, which through many years he sowed broadcast (with great judgment indeed, but with a most liberal hand), over the whole field of benevolent enterprise, amounted to little, if anything, short of a hundred thousand pounds.

Many friends of this excellent man have expressed a wish that some sketch of him should be given to the public, not merely as a brief record of his worth, but as suggestive of some useful lessons. They have thought that the chief facts of his history and character may be a profitable study for many young men entering mercantile life; especially in this day, when the successful merchant occupies a far more important

position, and exercises a far larger influence on society, than ever before. It is true, indeed, that in every age and country, if his culture, his knowledge, and his worth, keep pace with his wealth, and he knows how to use that wealth as an instrument of good, he is one of the most enviable of mortals: he possesses, if he has but the inclination to do good on a large scale, the power granted to few, of gratifying it. What most men can only wish he can execute. All that he has to do, is to "*devise* liberal things," and they are done. He resembles the skilled landscape gardener who not only has (to use a phrase of a certain writer on the picturesque) "the prophetic eye of taste," but can turn his ideal dreams into delightful realities. And probably there never were so many men in this enviable position, in any age and country as in our own.

It is from sharing the conviction that Mr. Fletcher's character may afford to many, but especially to the young merchant, a profitable theme of contemplation, that the following brief sketch has been written. If it were merely to blazon his name and virtues, one would hesitate: so alien was it from the nature of the man to court applause, so little did he "let his left hand know what his right hand did," that it might be questioned whether he would not prefer entire oblivion to anything like a public eulogy. But men owe it to themselves not to forget those who deserve to be re-

membered; and, as it is not possible to flatter the vanity or insult the modesty of those who are gone, so, if their lives can furnish inviting examples to those whom they leave behind, there seems no sufficient reason for silence.

It would be foreign to the objects of this sketch however,—even if the space allotted to it did not forbid,—to give Mr. Fletcher's biography in full. No details, therefore, of his private or domestic life will be found in it, except such as may be necessary to illustrate those aspects of his character, as a Christian and a citizen, which may be most profitably studied by young men. Among such details must be reckoned a few particulars of his youthful days, that the reader may see under what circumstances and influences his early character—in which, as the poetic paradox has it, the “boy is father to the man”—was formed.

He was born at Compton, near Wolverhampton, in Staffordshire, where his forefathers had lived for some generations on their patrimonial acres. The property had been diminished by the extravagance of his grandfather, whose riot and whose penitence were doomed to be equally fatal to his children's inheritance; for, having wasted a good portion of the estate during his life, he superstitiously sought to make amends by bequeathing twenty acres to the Church at his death. Mr. Fletcher's father, the eldest of six sons,

thanks to the innate energy of his character, in some degree repaired the mischief the grandsire had done, and prevented the fortunes of the family from sinking lower. He was a man of great integrity and worth, and brought up in respectability a large family of ten children, of whom Samuel Fletcher was the youngest but one. His mother was the daughter of a Dissenting Minister at Dudley, of whose strong sense, active domestic virtues, and sincere piety, he ever retained the strongest impression; and to her influence and companionship (as is plain from a fragmentary notice of his early life, found among his papers) he attributed a large share in the formation of his character. As his father was a Churchman, and his mother had been brought up a Dissenter, so Mr. Fletcher may be said to have inherited some of the best qualities of both communions, and certainly ever evinced in after life a spirit of conciliation, and a large-hearted tolerance of ecclesiastical differences, which fancy might suppose prefigured by such an extraction. It would seem, from the fragment just referred to, that this "youngest but one" was a special favourite with his mother; though she often manifested her partiality in modes which, however intended for his good, showed a much higher appreciation of his ultimate welfare than of his present inclinations; on the other hand, the ready obedience which it is evident he ever yielded to her wishes, even when they seemed unreasonable, was a

good augury of his future character. He had well learned to "bear," and to bear with cheerfulness, "the yoke in his youth."

His good mother was one of those notable managers who believe that the cardinal vice of all youth is idleness, and that if all sin does not consist in it, at least all sin will grow out of it; and in that, perhaps, she was not far wrong. A sentence or two in which he speaks of his mother's discipline, and the somewhat equivocal form which his holidays assumed, will give some idea of the influences under which his youth was moulded. He was little likely, it may be inferred, to be idle or waste his time in after life.

"My mother," he says, "was a most active, industrious woman. I never knew her unoccupied. When the active duties of the day were done, she took her knitting in hand; and on my return from school in the evening, she required me to read to her the Bible or some religious work. If haply, on my way from leading the cows back to pasture, I turned aside to join a game of play with the boys on the green, I soon heard my mother's shrill voice, summoning me back to the homestead. . . . If other occupation failed, there was always some bed in the garden to be weeded; and the greater part of one midsummer vacation I spent in weeding a field of seven acres of barley, overspread by the wild mustard. Here, alone, and a mile from any house, the hours

passed slowly away. Thus, I never knew what it was to suffer from *idle* weariness."

At ten years of age he was sent to the Grammar School at Wolverhampton. Here he received the education which was usually given at similar schools at that day. As Compton was two miles from the school,—where he had to make his appearance by seven o'clock, in all weathers and at all seasons,—it is pretty plain that the discipline at home for preventing "idleness," and forming hardy and industrious habits, must have been vigorously enforced by his school experience. He says, "The school-hours were from seven to nine, ten to twelve, and two to five; and as I had two miles to walk, I had to leave home in the morning soon after six. This, in the winter season, was often felt to be a hardship, as the road was lonely, and led for some distance through a deep, dark hollow. I was generally one of the first arrivals, and got a good warming at the fire before the school commenced. My progress in classical learning was certainly not impeded by the fulness of my daily diet. A two miles' walk and two hours' study was a good preparation for breakfast,—which consisted daily of a roll and a pat of butter. On returning home after school, I carried my Virgil under my arm, and learned my twenty lines of repetition on the way." On arriving home he had his other lessons for the next day to prepare, while his indefatigable mother

generally exacted some home-tasks by way of filling up any chance vacuities in the evening of the well-spent day.

At the age of fourteen he was apprenticed at Wolverhampton, and a curious incident shows how early and strong was that desire for mental culture and self-improvement which characterised him through life. There was one apartment allotted to the use of himself and two fellow-apprentices, where, when the business of the day was over, they adjourned to waste or use their leisure, as their several tastes dictated. While young Fletcher sat diligently reading, one of his companions was practising on the French horn, and the other might be heard spouting Shakspeare with loud voice and vehement gesticulation. This last gentleman became afterwards a comic actor of some celebrity: whether the youth who accompanied him on the French horn ever achieved any musical reputation, is not known; but it may be safely inferred that the quiet studies of their young companion, so perseveringly pursued and amidst such hubbub, indicated a decided turn for the "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties," and gave hope of his being something in after life.

In 1805, when twenty years of age, he came to Manchester, and after some years of further experience in a Manchester house, he commenced business in 1811 for himself; and in a few years, by constant

assiduity and perseverance, took his place among the foremost merchants of that great mercantile city.

From this time forward there is little to be related in connection with his commercial life ; there are no great catastrophes to be recorded, no brilliant speculations, no signal reverses or recoveries—such as sometimes make mercantile history almost a romance. His prosperity flowed on in an equable stream—due in a great degree to that characteristic prudence and judgment, which made him averse from all rash ventures, and to that thorough integrity which gave him the entire confidence of all with whom he had transactions.

In a word, he conducted business after those modes and in that spirit, which must ever constitute the true glory of commerce, and which first secured for the “British Merchant” the honours attached to his name and position.*

* A striking example of the integrity with which Mr. Fletcher interpreted promises, whether there was or not a *formal* obligation, was given a short time after he commenced business.

An event of European interest (the battle of Leipsic) caused a revolution in the Manchester market, and suddenly and enormously enhanced the value of a certain class of goods, of which Mr. Fletcher happened to have a considerable quantity in stock, but which he had virtually promised to a customer at a much lower price, before the startling news arrived. An enterprising speculator came in, and offered to take the entire stock at the present advanced prices, or even to advance upon that. Mr. Fletcher told him that though the goods were in his warehouse, they were not his to sell. It was in vain that the usual casuistry

In attempting to trace a few features of Mr. Fletcher's character, a prominent place must be given to a trait in which few men of business have offered a more instructive example to young men ; we allude to his persevering efforts at self-culture and his ardent pursuit of knowledge, under a firm conviction both that all such culture and knowledge may be turned to profitable uses, and that, whether they be so or not, they constitute *per se* a main source of that happiness in life, of which riches, honours, success, and all the forms of material prosperity are still but instruments, and of value only as they promote it ; though they are too often foolishly regarded as *ends*. This desire for self-improvement has been illustrated in an incident of Mr. Fletcher's youth ; and it followed him through the whole of his more busy years. His school education, as already shown, terminated early,—as he often lamented ; he was soon immersed in the active duties of life : and while laying the foundation of his business, and rearing it to the solid structure it after-

of interest was employed to shake the plain ethics of truth and honour ; it was in vain urged that the goods were still on his hands, that the bargain had not been formally ratified, that when he made the promise it was impossible he could anticipate such a sudden change in the market, and so on. Mr. Fletcher contented himself with saying that, however vexatious the loss, he had really, if not formally, agreed to part with the goods at the price stipulated ; and that “a just man, even though he swears to his own hurt, changeth not.”

wards became, he was also much occupied, as became a Christian man and a good citizen, in various public movements. But nothing prevented his sedulous efforts to cultivate his own mind. He gave a portion of every day to the perusal of that class of books which are alike precious as mental tonics, and valuable for the knowledge they convey. In order to secure leisure for this, he regulated his time with a severe economy, and redeemed some hours, either at night or early morning, which others would have given to sleep or idle amusement. We have it from members of his family, that when he was in the mid career of his most busy life, he was for many years in the habit of rising very early, lighting his own fire (which was laid over night), and spending two or three hours in reading, and in private devotion, before going to his counting-house. In the evening he generally spent some time, in spite of the fatigues of the day, in a similar manner; often, however, reading aloud to his family, when they were alone,—which he did with excellent taste and judgment. He usually selected either some book of solid instruction, or such portions of the best poetry or prose-fiction, as would really repay perusal, and improve the mind as well as delight it. In these ways he gained a fair acquaintance with no small portion of the best English classics, and evinced to the end of his life the liveliest appreciation of them. So intent was he

on treasuring up what struck him as gems of thought, whether in poetry or prose, that he was in the habit of copying out in the blank leaves of his pocket-book any remarkable passage he met with in his daily reading; and the widely different sources from which these are taken, show both how excursive his reading was, and how thoughtfully he read. Systematically pursuing this course of intelligent self-improvement, he acquired not only knowledge, but a correct and manly taste, and keenly appreciated whatever was marked by masculine vigour of thought and expression; of course, as a necessary consequence, learning to despise the superficial literature which forms a large portion of the *pabulum mentis* of the young of this generation, and too often effectually stunts their general intellectual growth. Second-rate fiction was his especial abhorrence. On the other hand he had a peculiarly keen relish for the beauties of poetry; indeed so keen that, exemplary man of business though he was, it would almost have ruined him in the eyes of the austere merchant in Rob Roy. Nay, the love of poetry so stimulated him, that he occasionally invoked the muse himself. He did not however, like Frank Osbaldistone, attempt those ambitious strains which exposed the unlucky "Ode to the Black Prince" to the scornful criticism of the senior; but employed his muse as a vehicle for expressing private affection or devotional feeling, and

in strains designed, of course, only for the family circle.

From nature and habit, activity was his element, and he could not be idle. One of his family relates that, after a serious illness which seemed to threaten paralysis (when he was near his seventieth year), and which compelled, for a considerable time, that enforced idleness which wearies such men more than the most irksome labour, the idea of compiling a small selection of hymns for domestic worship fortunately occurred to him,—a light and pleasant task which might occupy without straining the mind. For this purpose he gathered about him all the “collections of hymns” he could lay his hands on. These he laboriously collated, and taking out what seemed to him the best (here and there abridging, or slightly altering), he formed a small selection which was afterwards printed for the use of his own family, and is one of the best we have seen ; containing enough for variety, yet not so many as to include any but the best. The retrenchments and omissions do much credit to the taste and judgment of the compiler.

It was an indication of the same activity of mind and love of knowledge, that when travelling for pleasure, he spared no exertion or cost in visiting whatever was curious or instructive in nature or art, or the localities hallowed by historic associations ; he was equally intent on making all such impressions

durable. For this purpose he would select for his evening readings in his family, either previous to setting out on a tour, or *en route*, such books of poetry, fiction, or history as bore upon the special locality he was about to visit, that they might be prepared intelligently to enjoy all they saw; for similar reasons, he always kept a brief journal of his tours, and, in some cases, was at the pains to illustrate it, by procuring and inserting engravings of the most remarkable places and objects he had seen. When a man does things of this kind simply for his own pleasure and improvement, or those of his family, without any hope of fame or profit, it can only be from an ardent love of knowledge and self-culture.

Of the value he attached to all culture, and of his earnest desire to secure to the mercantile classes in particular the means of an improved education, he gave signal proof in the part he took in the formation of Owens' College (opened in 1851), the original conception of which, we believe, is due to him; and that circumstance, together with the importance of the institution itself, may justify a little detail as to its origin, and its special utility in such a city as Manchester.

In conversation with one of his most intimate friends, George Faulkner, Esq., Mr. Fletcher mentioned that in a late journey on the Continent, he had been struck with the facilities afforded to the middle classes, by the colleges existing in many large towns of

Germany and Switzerland, of obtaining a liberal education at small expense. He regretted that a city like Manchester should have no such institution, where young men, destined for mercantile life, might secure a higher culture than was at present open to them. He suggested that it would be a noble and worthy thing, if some man of fortune who had no immediate claims on him, were to appropriate it to this object; that any individual who would found such a college would be a benefactor to the town, and to many generations; and that, for himself, he would be glad, at any time, to give a thousand pounds towards it. Mr. Faulkner was much interested in the conversation. Shortly after, this gentleman was summoned to the deathbed of an intimate friend, Mr. Owens, who told him that, as he had no children or near relatives, he had sent for him to consult with him as to how he should dispose of the bulk of his fortune, 100,000*l.* It is reported that he offered to make Mr. Faulkner his heir, and that the latter replied that "he had enough of his own," and, with magnanimous simplicity, declined it; but, remembering the idea suggested by Mr. Fletcher, he asked Mr. Owens if he could do better than found a College in his own town with it? Mr. Owens was pleased with the notion, and so the money was appropriated to this object. It is certainly not often that the offer of 100,000*l.* is thus philosophically declined, or that

so few words serve to transfer such a sum from a private to a public destination !

Mr. Fletcher had long discerned the urgent need of some such institution, and was fond of descanting on the advantages to the young merchant of a better education than the ordinary schools afforded. He had a firm conviction that a man would not be the less diligent in business, nor make the worse merchant, for a sound general training ; and in this he was unquestionably right. As special reasons for a college at Manchester, he argued that, many a parent who would prize a liberal education for his children, would hesitate to incur the expenditure of time and money involved in sending them to the universities ; that many others felt a natural reluctance, when a young man was predestined to business, to incur the hazard of such an experiment, as the *genius loci*, the seductions of a too long sojourn in the abodes of the Muses, and the attractions of polite literature, too often alienated the mind from commerce altogether ; that from the early age at which it was often absolutely necessary for a youth to enter the manufactory or the warehouse, it was impossible that the experiment (whether wise or not) should be made ; and that hence it was most desirable that there should be in Manchester itself an institution in which, while not neglecting the disciplinary studies essential to all intellectual development, special attention might be

given to the pursuits likely to be of most value to men of business ; especially to those departments of science (as, for example, chemistry) which are chiefly useful in the arts, and to commercial and economical philosophy.

To this happy and well-timed suggestion of one of these three friends—to the magnanimity of the second, and the munificence of the third—Owens' College owed its origin. Nor was that casual suggestion, leading as it did to such important results, among the least of the many good deeds of Mr. Fletcher's long and useful life.

In this Institution, Mr. Fletcher ever took, during the remainder of his life, the liveliest interest,—himself founding a scholarship, and giving, once and again, considerable sums towards the purchase of a suitable building as well as to its general funds. His benevolent feelings were warmly interested in the project, not only because it enabled many lads to carry on their education beyond the school training, before finally going into the manufactory or counting-house, or (if they *must* go there at the early age they often do) because it enabled them to remedy their deficiencies by evening classes and lectures ; but, still more, because he thought it likely to have beneficial *moral* effects on the same class, by usefully occupying the intervals of leisure ; leisure which, otherwise, is apt to be wasted, or worse than wasted ; he thought that,

at the very least, it might prevent many from sinking into what they too often become—mere machines in the warehouse or counting-house, and mere idlers and loungers when the day's work is done ; having little intelligence, except that which is required for the mechanical routine of business, and no knowledge of books, except that of the last slipshod novel.

For these reasons he thought that the supplementary means of improvement which Owens' College affords, especially in its evening classes, might prove most valuable ; and the Institution is in fact more and more appreciated in this respect.

Mr. Fletcher's convictions of the desirableness of giving to young men a longer and more thorough training than commonly falls to their lot, were doubtless in part derived from his recollection of the disadvantages under which he had himself laboured, but still more from the benefits he had reaped from his own resolute and self-denying efforts for mental culture.

Though most men will agree in the general truth and soundness of Mr. Fletcher's views on this subject, there are, and will be, very different opinions as to the sort and degree of culture possible and desirable under the different circumstances of mercantile life ; and if Mr. Fletcher seemed sometimes disposed to press his opinions more strongly than some of his mercantile friends approved, the difference of judgment probably originated in not sufficiently discriminating

between the utterly different conditions (wide as the poles asunder), under which the classes which compose the great mercantile and manufacturing world are formed, and which make it simply impossible to lay down any methods of education equally applicable to all. Three coexisting generations in the manufacturing districts (father, son, and grandson), will sometimes bridge over the whole space between the artisan and the peer !

There is, for example, and there always will be, a class of prosperous and successful manufacturers and merchants, to whom the whole question is almost without significance ; men who before they began, properly speaking, that career which has terminated in great wealth and influence, had the question decided for them by circumstances ; men who, in their youth, never had, and could not get, more than the most rudimentary sort of school knowledge ; but who, having plenty of mother-wit, perhaps great inventive genius, indomitable energy of character, indefatigable industry, resolute desire for improvement (so far as leisure permitted), the acuteness to see, and the perseverance to avail themselves of every chance of success, have risen from the very lowest station to an affluence which many of the aristocracy would envy. Such men will always be cropping out from the lower strata of mercantile society, and rising above it ; and hard bits of granite they generally are.

Even with regard to such men, indeed, it is true that "the more knowledge the better;" the more they have when they begin to climb the hill, the easier the ascent will be. This is often exemplified in the history of enterprising Scotch lads, to whom their grammar-school education, and the habits of mind formed by it, have frequently given a most prosperous start. Though Dr. Johnson might growl out, that learning in Scotland was like bread in a besieged city, "where each man has a mouthful and no man a bellyful," these youths have found it abundantly true, that "half a loaf is better than no bread." Nevertheless it is also true, that with regard to the self-made men here referred to, knowledge must have been scanty at the best; and education, except such as they have bestowed upon themselves, little more than a name.

And many of them *do* bestow that education on themselves to some purpose; so that observers, who have lived among them, will often be surprised at the transformation which energy of character, friction with the world, converse with the more educated classes, habits acquired by having to deal with large transactions and to administer complicated affairs, have often effected; though doubtless, to the last, these men often remind us of Milton's half-created lion, part out of the earth, and part below it:—

"—— pawing to get free
Their hinder parts."

But what is to become of the second generation, the *sons* of these men, born to competence, perhaps to great wealth? It would be as cruel, as it would be impossible, to condemn them to begin at the very lowest round of the ladder: and we must do their hard-headed fathers the justice to say, that they are in general fully aware of the importance of the education they themselves lacked, and most anxious that their sons should enjoy it.

One of these sons perhaps will go to the Law, another into the Church, a third will be a country gentleman. For these, no reason can be assigned why they should not receive the ordinary University education; but what is to be done with those who are predestined, or predestine themselves, to carry on their father's business? to administer the affairs of his manufactory with its 1000 or 1200 hands, or occupy his high-legged throne (it is hardly too strong a term for that seat of power) at the warehouse? How are these to be best qualified to hold their own, and more than their own, against the enterprising *novus homo* who (like their own fathers) will anon be rising up and be "ready to push them from their stools?" They must, for the most part, begin early; to defer the race till the university curriculum has been fully run, is to lose it. Nor are there wanting, as experience shows, other dangers to be guarded against. Many examples prove that the prejudice of mercantile men against

giving their sons the full advantages of a University education, is not without foundation ; and hence they look upon such a course with suspicion. The instances are not few, as they see, in which it has proved a perilous experiment to give the youth destined to commerce, that education which is very properly given to him who is looking forward to one of the learned professions, or to no profession at all. The associations formed, the nature of the studies pursued, the prolonged time spent in scenes and avocations foreign to commerce may, and often do, disgust the young mind with the thought of it ; the University becomes to such a student what Calypso's Isle was to Ulysses ; and the not unfrequent issue is, that the youth refuses to enter on commerce, or soon quits it, or worse than all, continues in it and becomes a—bankrupt. Hence parents have often doubted whether anything beyond the school training, which is to terminate at the age of fourteen or so, is good for men of business. But in this they are assuredly in the wrong. All that is required is, that the general direction of a youth's training (and especially towards the close of it) should be such as to bear upon his future destination. If this be kept in view, there are few who would not coincide in those opinions of Mr. Fletcher, which made him so strenuous an advocate for Owens' College.

It may be remarked that not only was his judgment

sound as to the advantages of a more prolonged and thorough education for mercantile men generally; but such education seems peculiarly necessary in the present day, if we consider the vast and complex character of modern mercantile transactions, and the possibilities of public position and influence which, in this free country, open to the successful merchant himself. As to the first: it is beginning to be felt that something more than a mere elementary knowledge, and mechanical adroitness in the routine of the counting-house, are essential to the just management of an extensive manufactory or a large shipping business. While there are some branches of trade in which it is admitted that it is not of much consequence, except to the youth himself, whether he be dismissed from school at thirteen or sixteen, and in which mere routine will be his duty through life, there are many others which, from the complicated relations of modern commerce, really require, in order to be wisely and effectively managed, as large an amount of well-digested knowledge and well-trained sagacity, as almost any pursuits to which a man can devote himself; they imply a mind drilled to habits of discrimination, accustomed to weigh evidence and calculate probabilities, inured to patient and persevering thought on difficult subjects, familiar with the leading principles of economic science, and an extensive knowledge of the nature of the commodities and wants of the principal

countries and markets of the globe. Without this, any large business will be liable to be carried on, not as commerce always *ought* to be carried on—as in fact a branch of human pursuit to which the principles of induction are strictly applicable—but as it too often *is* carried on, namely, as a matter of hope and chance ; not as the result of a patient and sagacious calculation of complicated probabilities, but just on the principles on which the same parties would put into a lottery or play a game at hazard. Nor does it appear improbable that many of the rash and gambling speculations which often disgrace the commerce of this great country, have flowed, not so much from an obliquity of moral principle, as from that insufficiency of knowledge and want of mental energy which a more thorough and complete training in the elements of the sciences of calculation and induction would go far to supply ; both as securing the requisite knowledge, and forming the habits of discrimination, energy, and industry, essential to its use. Without such knowledge and such habits, the mind will neither have light enough, nor strength enough, to deal with difficult problems of commerce ; and *with* them, it assuredly will not trade upon hope and chance, where either certainty or probability can be substituted for them. Nor, secondly, is this training of less consequence in relation to the possible, often probable, public destination of the successful merchant or manufacturer himself. He may rightfully

aspire, if he but conjoin with wealth adequate mental culture, to become a magistrate, a member of Parliament, even a member of the Government ; and in all probability the House of Commons will be more and more recruited from this class of men.

In the *third* generation, that rapid transformation of which this free country has happily afforded so many instances, is often complete. Transformed into large capitalists or landowners, the representatives of the families of great manufacturers or merchants are often lost to the eyes of commerce altogether. These folks may do as they please about a full University education for their children ; and perchance one or other of those who receive it (though no more than the grandson of a handloom weaver), may sit on the woolsack, or be Chancellor of the Exchequer, or, like Sir Robert Peel, become Prime Minister of England. It is this "possibility of achieving greatness," open to every man according to his ability, that constitutes one of the most glorious features of our country ; but there are no spots in it in which such strange mutations of fortune have been so frequently or so rapidly effected as in the great manufacturing and mercantile centres. In three coexisting generations, as before said, we may sometimes see the widest possible extremes of social life ; a bridge of only three arches shall span the whole interval between the cottage and the palace !

Mr. Fletcher might probably, if he had pleased, have been himself an instance among many others of the facility with which successful commerce opens the way to an honourable public career.

His character and talents, integrity and sound judgment, and that general culture for which we have been pleading in men of his class, led some of his fellow-citizens on one occasion to ask if he would consent to be nominated as a candidate for the representation of Manchester. But he was then past the prime of life, and he could not prevail upon himself (nor were his family willing to give him up) to leave the domestic privacy he loved so well. For many years, however, he acted as one of the magistrates for the county: and the copious notes he took of the cases brought before him on the bench, show the conscientious diligence with which he discharged that office.

But it is as a Christian philanthropist—as a “faithful steward” of the large gifts of fortune with which he had been entrusted—that his character chiefly claims admiration, and is instructive as an example. From the earliest period of his career he was in the habit of giving a certain proportion of his income to charity—a proportion which he enlarged as his wealth increased; and the present writer speaks from knowledge, and strictly within limits, in saying, that for a long series of years Mr. Fletcher’s annual benefactions amounted to nearly thirty or forty per cent. of his

income. This charity, while most catholic as regards its application, was exercised with great discrimination ; a cool judgment presided over it : he was never led away by enthusiasm, and, unless thoroughly convinced that the object justified his liberality, he well knew how to refuse,—a task often quite as hard as it is to give. His charity was always most unostentatious ; often choosing secret channels for its conveyance, and only known to his friends by accident, or the verdure of the spots it irrigated. “Much of the good he did,” says Mr. Thompson, in his Funeral Sermon, “could not be concealed ; but his private charities, there is reason to believe, were large and unwearied.”

In every enterprise of religious benevolence, whether local or general, Mr. Fletcher was ever ready to co-operate. To the Bible and Missionary Societies he subscribed munificently. Of the Manchester branch of the London Missionary Society he was one of the founders, for many years the treasurer, and always a most liberal benefactor. In addition to his ample annual subscription, he gave large sums to the society at various times, and on one occasion a donation of 1000*l*. Of local associations none had more of his time, energy, or bounty, than the Manchester City Mission. Like many other generous men in that city, he himself paid the annual stipend of one missionary. Besides this, many supplementary

donations, when funds fell short, came from his purse, though few beyond the secretary (and he not always) knew whence it came. It has been said that he was one of the first who enlarged the general scale of giving to religious and benevolent objects, by exposing the absurdity of that traditional guinea which once formed the too uniform, because it had become the customary, gratuity, whether the donor was a man of 500*l.* or 5000*l.* a year.

But his benevolence, like that of all truly religious men, did not restrict itself to the care of the soul alone; indeed, the last-named Society, in which he took so deep an interest to his last hour, is hardly less designed or adapted to promote the temporal than the spiritual well-being of those for whom it was instituted. In the same manner, every plan for alleviating the sorrows of the poor, the sick, the blind, the orphan, were secure of Mr. Fletcher's sympathy and aid.

He was, indeed, in his own person a striking refutation of certain plausible calumnies with which Christian philanthropy is often assailed. While it is the glory of Christianity that its history has ever been marked by an impartial benevolence; that it ever has been, and is at this moment, identified with those institutions and societies which contemplate the alleviation of man's temporal condition as well as the promotion of his spiritual welfare,—institutions and

societies of which the ancient world never dreamed,—the Christian is often taunted (especially in this day) with expending his liberality on purely religious objects ; with forgetting the misery and squalor which lie at his door, in a fanatic concern for the heathen abroad ; with converting the Hindoo or Hottentot, and letting his next-door neighbour perish in ignorance or starvation ! It is sufficient answer to say that there is not a single religious community, scarcely a religious congregation of any community, however small and poor, that has not its distinct machinery, not only for the alleviation of sickness and penury among its own members, but for succouring the needy, clothing the naked, and instructing the ignorant of its own neighbourhood. We will venture to say that those who, like Mr. Fletcher, are signally known for their munificence to purely religious objects, are also those who are best known as the supporters of all schemes of general philanthropy. It would perhaps be not too much to say that the annual revenue derived merely from that one rite in which Christians commemorate the love of the Master who commended to them the afflicted as “ His brethren ”—a revenue which is in all Churches consecrated to their benefit—forms no mean supplement to the sum that is levied by the poor-rates on the public at large ; though *that* provision too is due to the fact that Christianity has taught the duty of

making it, and is known only to the nations that have learned her maxims. Go where we will, if we find men penetrating the haunts of ignorance, and succouring disease and sickness, it will be found that it is generally Christian principle that impels them, and in proportion as they are Christians. And it were strange if it were otherwise, since such active benevolence is made the very test of all true-hearted disciples of Christ; who are told that, "Whoever hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

This calumny, in fact, is seldom taken up by those who have given themselves the trouble to examine the statistics of benevolence. Those who have, will be soon convinced that whatever Christians give to directly religious objects, will be found not disproportionate to what they expend on general objects of philanthropy; nor what they do for religion abroad, disproportionate to what they do for benevolence at home. As was well said by a preacher whom we chanced to hear the other day, "the beggar who sat for alms at the gate of the temple called Beautiful, was but a type of multitudes in all ages, who, in spite of all calumnies, have a shrewd suspicion that they will be as likely, and a little more likely, to meet with charity at the doors of church or chapel than elsewhere, and from religious rather than irreligious

people." And certainly, during the wide-spread destitution of the Cotton Famine, that conviction of the suffering poor was strongly illustrated and confirmed.

The active benevolence which characterised Mr. Fletcher while he was in business, still characterised him when he left it ; or, rather (as all men of "retired leisure" should), he now made *that* his business ; and committees, reports, and treasurerships, found him almost as regular employment in his counting-house as commerce had done.

In this respect, also, Mr. Fletcher was an instructive example. He gave his time, toil, and talents in the cause of charity as freely as his money : and thus saw for himself that his bounty was duly administered. Many men of wealth are willing to give their money, but are not ready to give anything else ; forgetting that the conscription of the Church Militant demands personal service, as well as pecuniary contributions ; and that it is only where the first cannot be rendered that the hired substitute can be accepted.

Two or three instances, both of his liberality and his mode of exercising it, may be here mentioned. Not a little of the good he did was due to the sagacity with which he singled out his objects and conjoined counsel with more substantial aid. One of the most eminent merchants of Manchester, and one of her most deservedly honoured citizens, has

himself often told, with a beautiful simplicity, how, beginning in very humble circumstances, he was at a critical period of his life encouraged by Mr. Fletcher when his own heart failed him ; and thus probably (as he himself deemed) owed to him the foundation of his future fortune. It seems that on commencing business, which was in a very modest way, he had, in dependence on a loan from a friend, purchased certain goods at Mr. Fletcher's warehouse. The friend disappointed him, and he thought, with that high-minded integrity which was a bright omen of his future course, that he had better abandon his project, return the goods, and pay whatever the owner might think equitable for the loss of sale, than incur obligations which he might not be able to meet. He accordingly waited on Mr. Fletcher and explained his difficulty. Mr. Fletcher, who saw what was in his young friend better than he did himself, told him he thought he was too precipitate in abandoning his scheme. The other replied that he had been too precipitate in forming it, and that he must, as an honest man, abandon it.

“Well,” said Mr. Fletcher, “the goods were sold to you in a perfectly regular way, and I shan't take them back, I assure you.” This sounded ominous ; but he added, with a smile, “Go on ; I think you will prosper ; but, if you can't pay for the goods, I shall never ask you for the money, so do not let that

trouble you." And so the good man went his way with a light heart ; prospered, as Mr. Fletcher predicted he would, and in due time became one of Manchester's " merchant princes " himself.

On another occasion, remarking a great air of depression in a young minister who had recently settled in Manchester, but who has long since won a large share of public esteem, Mr. Fletcher said to him, " What is the matter ? I am sure you must be suffering from some secret trouble. Tell me frankly what it is ; and, if I can, it will give me great pleasure to relieve you." At last, much pressed, he acknowledged that there was a debt on his place of worship which he did not see much hope of getting rid of ; and that he was seriously debating with himself whether he must not quit Manchester and seek another scene of labour. Mr. Fletcher asked him the amount of the debt. He was told about 500*l*. " Is that what is troubling you ? " said Mr. Fletcher. " Well, here is 100*l*. for you, and I will get a few friends to make up the rest." He was as good as his word ; and the worthy man, relieved of his trouble, laboured so successfully, that he saw another place built, and obtained a second 100*l*. towards it from his old benefactor.

It would not be easy to say how many young men were stimulated, both by his precept and example, to adopt his own large-hearted and systematic style of

giving : a style of giving really founded on a conscientious calculation of the ratio of income to the claims upon it. One of the most intelligent, active, and liberal of the present generation of Manchester merchants, one who is "zealous in every good word and work," anxious not only for the religious but the social welfare of all whom he can influence, has been known to relate how, when a lad, he was so impressed by Mr. Fletcher's expounding, on some public occasion, the obligation to give after this liberal fashion, that he mentally resolved from that moment to follow the counsel given, and has acted upon it ever since. The cause of public benevolence has already been the better for those few remarks by many thousands of pounds ; and if the enterprising and benevolent man to whom allusion is made, should be spared to Mr. Fletcher's age, it will be the better by many thousand pounds more.

His example as to a liberal style of giving operated very strongly on the minds of many of his contemporaries, and of the next generation. It is but justice to Manchester to say that there was then, and is still, a class of men in that city quite ready to profit by the lesson ; men who are liberal after a style which very few places in the world can equal.

This munificence is, in part, probably due to familiarity with large transactions, and proportionately extensive gains ; engendering in many cases a certain

“magnificence” of conception, as Aristotle would say, which one would seek in vain among the ordinary haunts of trade.* Not a few of these “merchant princes” have learned not only to spend, but happily also to *give*, on the scale of their commercial transactions. This at first sight would seem to contradict another remark of the same shrewd philosopher (generally true to human nature), that it is those who have *inherited* large wealth who are most liberal of it ; while those who have made it for themselves are in general the most niggardly, as knowing what trouble they have had in getting it; he compares them to “mothers and poets,” apt to be too fond of their own offspring. But though this observation is founded in general truth, it has its exceptions; exceptions frequent enough to entitle them to a place among the “Anti-theta” of Bacon. For when gains are large, when the transactions which produce them are large in proportion, and vast sums are constantly passing through the hands, a lavish habit of soul is often produced, quite as marked as can be found in the most favoured possessors of hereditary wealth.

* The prodigious growth of this great mercantile emporium has been the work of about fifty years. To show with what a rapid current, or rather torrent, this prosperity has flowed, Mr. Fletcher was in the habit of saying that during his fifty-six years of residence he had seen the population of Manchester and Salford increase from about 50,000 to more than 500,000—a tenfold increase ; a population, in fact, doubling itself on an average in little more than every fifteen years.

Many a "public beggar," who has tried the experiment will vouch for the truth of what is here said. Manchester often proves a very Eldorado to such as have to solicit subscriptions. There is not, perhaps, any place in England where the timid "mendicant" of some religious or philanthropic society has been more frequently surprised by a larger gratuity than he had expected, or had ventured to ask ; when, looking only for a guinea, he has received two, or asking for two, has received five. The Manchester men have their faults, no doubt, like the men of all other places; faults which the world is not slow to spy out, nor much disposed to spare : but faults in many cases which are the very opposite of avarice. For profuse hospitality, and a large-hearted charity, the folks of Manchester need not fear comparison with those of any place in the world.

The subject of this sketch was conspicuous for both these virtues. Broomfield, in fact, was nearly an open house for those who visited Manchester on any errand of religious or social philanthropy ; the great difference between it and an ordinary hotel being that such guests were entertained with greater observance, and when they went away, usually found the funds of their society augmented, instead of being diminished.

Another point in which Mr. Fletcher was worthy of admiration and imitation, was his catholicity of spirit. While most earnestly attached to what he deemed the

essential truths of Christianity, as held by what is generally called "the Evangelical School" in the Established Church, or among the Congregationalists (with whom he ordinarily worshipped), no one could be a greater enemy to all bigotry, more tolerant of minor differences, or impatient of what he considered the mere "Shibboleths" of religious parties. All forms of ecclesiastical polity he regarded as at best the outworks and buttresses of religious truth. So far did he carry this notion, that his friends have sometimes smiled at his vehemence on the subject; his zeal against intolerance was now and then almost itself intolerant, and his love of peace, like that of some members of the Peace Society, apt to look very much like war.

He practically became a Congregationalist in early life; but chiefly, from that condition of things which turned a good many other men into Nonconformists sixty years ago, namely, the spiritual lethargy of the Establishment at that time. But he had not, probably, any very decided convictions on the abstract question of the connection between Church and State, or on some other points in the controversy between the Church and Nonconformists;—points, not indeed of little moment in themselves, as many good men on *both* sides are full ready to affirm, let the truth be on which side it may. But of little importance *relatively*, we may well admit them to be; and for that very

reason they were of little importance in the eyes of so cosmopolitan a Christian as Mr. Fletcher. During the last twenty years of his life he worshipped both in church and chapel, though he was still found punctually on Sunday morning in his old seat, in the Congregational Chapel, Grosvenor Street ; and to the end was a most liberal supporter of all its societies and institutions, and the faithful friend of the three successive pastors who occupied its pulpit during his long membership of fifty-three years. He attached himself to this congregation in the year 1806, when as a young man he first settled in Manchester. Mr. Roby, a name still revered there, *then* presided over it ; a man who resembled Mr. Fletcher in many important respects,—in the soundness of his judgment, the consistency and uprightness of his life, the catholicity of his sentiments and sympathies, and his unwearied benevolence. Like his friend and hearer, Mr. Fletcher, he conciliated, to an extraordinary degree, the love and veneration, not only of his co-religionists, but of all his fellow-citizens, and well deserved that noble encomium passed upon him in the eloquent discourse preached at his death by the late Dr. McAll.

The various excellence we have been describing was deeply radicated in, and coloured by, religious principle ; and so will it ever be with a consistent and equable virtue. A man may be compassionate from

sentiment, or prudent from habit or temperament ; he may be a peacemaker from constitutional timidity ; he may be just in his transactions from a regard to interest as well as from a sense of right. But when he is alive to every claim of duty, and discharges each with impartial assiduity, it can only be from the supremacy of Conscience ;—that religious conviction, which, presiding over all the faculties of our nature, attunes them all to harmony, prompts them to a proportioned and regulated activity, and exercises a uniform and diffusive influence over the whole life. And it was so with the subject of this sketch.

The secret spring of that power by which Mr. Fletcher was enabled thus equably to discharge the duties of life—to consecrate the large gifts that Providence had conferred upon him, to walk undazzled in the brightness of a life of almost continuous prosperity, to remain firm amidst the dark days of adversity—is to be found in his habitual devotion, and daily communion “with the eternal and unseen.” Hence in all things, and as an habitual conviction of his every-day life, he realized his relation to the Great Master, and acted as ever in His eye. All his benefactions were conceived in the spirit,—“The silver and the gold is Thine, and of Thine own have we given Thee.” All his prosperity in a similar manner was received as an immediate donation from God : while enjoying, and properly using it, no one could be

more sensible of its precarious nature except as secured by such a charter ; nor more aware of the dangers which it must ever bring to a soul untempered by the influences of religion. Again and again, in his private papers, appear passages which express his profound sense of this, and his earnest supplications that prosperity might not imperil the health of the soul, nurture habits and feelings of pride or vain-glory, or make him forgetful of the only safe condition of its enjoyment—that of “walking humbly with God.” When he bought Broomfield and entered on a mode of life to which his position and fortune entitled him, but which contrasted with his previous more simple habits, he says:—“This day I removed with my family to Cheetham Hill, and took possession of a house more spacious and costly than I ever expected to occupy. I pray to God that my heart may not be lifted up on this account, and that I may not be permitted to indulge proud and vain thoughts of my own sufficiency and stability ; or disposed to be less earnest in seeking ‘a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’”

Perhaps he was permitted to enjoy this continuous outward prosperity because he had so well learned and habitually practised those lessons which in general are only learned in adversity,—lessons so often necessary to shatter in pieces the arrogance and self-sufficiency which prosperity has engendered. But though

he might not require the lesson of any great reverses of fortune, he doubtless needed, like every other man, the trials by which God tests the faith which is willing to trust Him in the darkness as in the light; the salutary medicines by which He restores or invigorates the health of the soul; the "great mercy of an affliction," (as Jeremy Taylor would say), with which "He chasteneth every son whom he receiveth." And when the dark days of sorrow came, Mr. Fletcher showed that he had well learned how to submit to the Divine Will. His acquiescence, indeed (particularly in one terrible tragedy of his life*), was such as almost to impress those who were strangers to him with the idea that he was a sort of Christian Stoic, so calm was his exterior, so self-possessed his manner, so uninterrupted his discharge, and even cheerful discharge, of everyday duties; so strongly did he exact of himself, and require in others, the mastery of every kind and degree of emotion which might be thought inconsistent with Christian resignation to the will of God. Any notion of his being "a Stoic," however, would have

* Allusion is here made to the murder of his daughter Harriet and her husband, on their estate in Eubœa, in Greece. The bullet which pierced the father's heart penetrated the cradle in which their first-born child was sleeping. The brigands (the chief of whom was a son of the priest of the village) were convicted and executed. While excluding the private details of Mr. Fletcher's life in general, allusion is freely made to this, for in truth it could be hardly called *private*,—awakening as it did a thrill of commiseration and sympathy through the whole country.

been a very erroneous one ; and, if this were the place for it, many proofs might be given indicating much sensibility and tenderness of heart. He acted as he did because he had tutored himself to comply with the claims of Christian resignation, and of manly fortitude.

Had he allowed the sums which he gave to religion and humanity to accumulate, he might easily have died a *millionaire*. But he put his money to a more profitable usury ; and reaped, at the very time, a greater as well as a purer gratification than he could have done by seeing the “glittering heap” grow larger. He was happy in having it to give ; still happier in being willing to give it ; and not least happy in this, that he left not one member of his family who wished that he had given less to the exchequer of the poor, or to the treasury of God ; or that he had died richer by any diminution of his alms to the halt, the blind, the orphan, or the widow.

Mr. Fletcher died, Oct. 13, 1863, in his seventy-ninth year, and was buried in St. Luke’s Church, amidst a large concourse of spectators who loved and revered his memory ; the Bishop of Manchester spontaneously paying a graceful tribute to his public worth by conducting the funeral service.

VI.

SOME THOUGHTS ON PROSE
COMPOSITION.

IF “prose,” according to the lucid definition which the *Maître de Philosophie* gives to “Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,” be “all that is not verse,” we need not wonder at the surprise or the rapture with which M. Jourdain found that “he had been talking prose for more than forty years without knowing it.” But if by “prose” he meant a “species of literary composition,”—possessing, no less than poetry, its characteristic proprieties in the apt expression of continuous thought and feeling,—then he enormously flattered himself in this conclusion.

In truth, the “art of prose composition” is a phrase quite as intelligible as the “art of painting” or the “art of music.” If it be thought that prose seems a more *natural* use of language, and verse a more *artificial*, the difference is still only one of degree.

Both are natural, and both are artificial. There are conditions of the human soul in which the boldest

outbursts of lyric song, though in one sense artificial, are as natural as the warbling of the nightingale ; while it is equally true that the most natural eloquence will be none the less natural, but the more so, that there has been a designed and skilful application of means to ends. In fact, the words Nature and Art, where the latter means no more than this, are but complements of one another, and can never be opposed.

So far from prose being so simple an affair as M. Jourdain supposes, it is a somewhat curious fact that in the literature of all nations it has been preceded by verse. Of course there was always plenty of prose of the nature of M. Jourdain's extemporaneous specimen,—who asks whether, “if he orders his servant to bring him his slippers, *that* is prose ?” and is happy to find it is. Language no doubt was always sufficient for colloquial purposes, before literary composition was thought of. Men could always buy and sell, and get gain, and cheat, and wrangle, and rail, and quarrel, and make it up again, without invoking any one of the Sacred Nine.*

* Coleridge curiously observes, “It has just struck my feelings that the Pherecydean origin of prose being granted, prose must have struck men with greater admiration than poetry. In the latter, it was the language of passion and emotion. . . . But to hear an evolving roll, or a succession of leaves, talk continually the language of deliberate reason in a form of continued preconception this must have appeared godlike.”

But in the sense of a “species of literary composition,” it dates later than poetry. Nor however curious, is the fact wonderful. In the development of literature in general, it could hardly be otherwise. Poetry under some form or other, in metre or without, would naturally be the elder-born of genius ; for in the history of a community, as in that of the individual, the imagination may be in its youthful prime, while reason is yet a child. As woman arrives at maturity before man, so the feminine graces of fancy may be in full bloom, while the intellect is still in its teens. Hence in part (though in part also from the necessities of a scanty vocabulary), the language of barbarous nations abounds in bold metaphor ; it has even been observed that their very laws are often couched in it. What cannot imagination do, when it can thus clothe the statute-book with the verdure of poetry ? Very beautiful certainly are many of the expressions in the Scandinavian laws ; as that, for example, which forbids trespass on the open and unguarded field, “inasmuch as it hath the hedge for its wall, and heaven for its roof ;” or that other which enforces the same law against trespassers, by describing the field “as under God’s lock.”

The poetry with which all literature commences, is not poetry in *substance* merely, but in *form* ; it is metrical. It is as if young fancy, revelling in happy sensation and stimulated by natural passion, broke

out like the birds into spontaneous melody ; or as if, to use the language of Milton, she

“ — fed on thoughts, which *voluntary* moved
Harmonious numbers.”

For the priority, not only of poetry in some shape, but of verse, to prose, many other reasons might be assigned, if this were the place for it. In the infancy of civilisation, in the absence, not merely of the printing-press, but of any generally understood methods of fixing and transmitting thought, composition would be a rarity and luxury ; copies (even if the art of writing were known) would be few, and few could read them. Composition must, therefore, be in such a form as would best aid memory and facilitate transmission ; and verse is the best expedient that can be devised for attaining both these objects. Nor is this all ; as the end of poetry considered as a species of composition is *delight*, it was natural to combine upon it all the elements of delight ; to invest it with the zone of Venus—fraught with every possible attraction ; and amongst not the least of these must be reckoned a metrical arrangement. This also more easily admitted the superadded charm of Music.

The interval between poetry and prose, as two species of *composition*, has varied in different ages and amongst different nations, though it has of course always been great.

If we compare classical and modern literature, we shall find reasons for inferring that between poetry and prose the chasm was yet wider amongst the ancients than with us. This at first sight seems contrary to obvious fact ; inasmuch as our poets generally submit to *one* restraint, and that a very onerous one, of which the Ancients knew nothing,—that is, *rhyme*. Nevertheless, either from the notions they entertained of the very different qualifications of mind which the two severally required, or from the refined metrical laws which their taste imposed on verse, or from both, it would seem that the two species of compositions were thought by them even wider apart than with us. And this would appear to be confirmed by a curious circumstance, which has perhaps hardly received sufficient attention from critics, that there is scarcely a name in Greek or Roman literature which has in any considerable degree distinguished itself in both forms of composition ; as if the Ancients had come to the conclusion either that the two were so totally distinct as to require in each a genius exclusively adapted to it, or that the difficulties of obtaining mastery in both were so great, that the aspirant to the double honour must content himself with less than the fame he might promise himself by undivided devotion to either. If Cicero wrote a few verses, they assuredly added nothing to his reputation, and one luckless jingling line, provokingly immortalised in the satire of Juvenal,

has been a standing joke against him in all ages.* Though Plato's writings overflow with the *essence* of poetry, and though his earliest compositions were poetical even in form, history does not record that he wrote anything in that way (except perhaps a single epigram) which satisfied his contemporaries, and certainly *does* record that he did not satisfy himself. In general the prose writers and the poets of Antiquity seem to have been as distinct as the poets and the painters, and for the most part punctiliously avoided invading each other's province.

Amongst the moderns the case is altered. We have numerous examples of men who have almost equally distinguished themselves in prose and verse. Some diminution of power there may be—except perhaps in the rarest cases, must be—in such feats, so long as it remains true that man will do *that* best which he makes his single and paramount object, and cannot achieve many things so well as he can achieve one. But it must be confessed, in relation to the present case, that many examples prove that the diminution of power is so slight as to be scarcely appreciable.

The contrast between ancient and modern literature in this respect is indeed somewhat less, when we reflect

* Tacitus (or the author, whoever he be, of the treatise “De Oratoribus”), while speaking with deserved contempt of Cicero's poetic efforts, slyly says that Cæsar also had composed verses, but that he had had better luck, inasmuch as few people had ever seen them !

that, for many subjects which most appropriately find their expression in poetry, we have whole classes of imaginative compositions unknown to the ancients—as, for example, the prose-romance and novel ; in which therefore it is not so wonderful that a poet, if he attempts them, should excel. Still the instances of authors who have written poetry of a high order, and at the same time distinguished themselves in departments of prose literature less allied to poetry than those I have just specified, are sufficiently numerous to show us that the Greeks and Romans entertained very different notions on the subject from our own ; different, either because the two species of composition—unlike as they always are—were separated by a still wider interval then than now ; or because precedent and custom had restricted the ancient writers to the one or the other ; or because they more rigidly applied the principle of the “division of labour,” for the purpose of securing the most perfect results in every branch of intellectual effort.

Some critics have made it a question whether it is possible for a poet to write good prose at all ;—and a very able one, who does not go quite so far, asks, “Whence, then, the fact that *few* great poets have succeeded as prose writers ?” Yet a glance at the history of modern literature would suggest more than a doubt as to whether this be a *fact*. It is true that we may here and there see a man of so poetical a

temperament in general or so exclusively adapted to some special branch of the art,—the lyrical, for example,—that he cannot comply gracefully with the severe requirements of prose ; or one whose imagination is so fertile or so sublime that poetry forms at all events the most appropriate vehicle of his conceptions ; or one so accustomed to write in metre that even his ordinary prose style perpetually reminds you of the measured march and cadence of verse,—just as we may see persons so accustomed to a certain movement of body that even in their ordinary gait they may be said rather to dance than to walk. But these are exceptions to the rule. In general, the most splendid poetical powers of invention and imagery, may not only find ample scope in the more refined or elevated species of imaginative prose-composition, but are so imperatively required there in order to attain the highest excellence, that if they be but conjoined with that strong sense which the great Roman critic represents as the basis of all good writing, the poet need not be afraid that he shall not “succeed as a prose-writer.”

At all events, it is idle to speculate in the face of facts. The prose of Cowley and of Dryden—that of the one better than his poetry, that of the other equal to it ; the prose of Milton, which though it has palpable defects, yet has also transcendent excellences ; the prose of Cowper and Gray, whose letters justly rank amongst

the finest specimens of composition in the whole compass of English literature ; the prose of Southey, Walter Scott, and Byron, all of whom have written prose admirably ; to say nothing of Goethe, Schiller, Herder, and others in Germany,—can hardly leave a doubt that poetry and prose, both of high order, may flow from the same pen.

While it may be true that there are structural differences of mind which in some cases would limit a great genius to either the one or the other, these examples are surely sufficient to show that it is not impossible to excel in both ; and that there must therefore have been other reasons for that sheer line of demarcation which the ancients made between them.

Michaelis in one of his acute notes on “Lowth’s Lectures on Hebrew Poetry,” doubts whether it is possible for a truly great poet ever to become a truly great orator, or *vice versâ*. But he who reads the speech over the dead body of Cæsar, which Shakspeare puts into Mark Antony’s mouth may perhaps be disposed to doubt, with Whately, whether he who was the greatest of dramatists, might not also have proved, under other circumstances, the greatest of orators ; and assuredly those who are familiarly acquainted with the prose writings of Milton, need not be told that he possessed in the highest perfection that great element of the highest style of oratory which the Greeks called “*δεινότης*,” but which in our language wants

a name,—consisting of argument “wrought in fire”—the product of an intellect all aglow, molten, as it were, with vehement passion. On the other hand, it is impossible to read Jeremy Taylor without feeling that he might have been a great poet. To borrow an expression I have used elsewhere, he speaks the language of poetry by a sort of necessity of his nature. He resembles those full clouds of spring which shake out their fertilizing showers with every breath of wind that stirs them ; the slightest movement of his mind is enough to detach the images from his ever-teeming fancy. No matter what his subject, he is sure to adorn it. Even over the most bleak and wintry wastes of casuistry or metaphysical theology, he passes like the very spirit of the spring, and all that is rich and beautiful in foliage and flower puts forth at his bidding.

Nature everywhere exhibits exhaustless variety in her products ; it is not the least singular example of her resources that she has impressed endless diversities of style and manner, no less on writers of prose than on the writers of poetry, though it requires a keen analytic skill always to determine in what the difference consists. Not only are there the generic distinctions of schools : there are no two individuals of any considerable originality, in whose styles there is not as distinct a character as in their handwritings. It seems, at first sight, marvellous. Though the points

in which any two great prose-writers resemble one another, must be unspeakably more numerous and important than those in which they differ ; though from the writings of either, the critic can extract exemplifications of all the laws of his art,—yet are there never two indistinguishably alike ! It is with minds as with faces ; obvious in their general resemblance, the diversities by which one is discriminated from another are as obvious. Such is the miracle which nature has everywhere achieved—that of reconciling essential unity with infinite variety. Minute original diversities of mind, whatever the general similarity,—minute differences of education, though its general system and methods may be the same,—and the circumstances of external life, which are never quite the same, give to the fruits of every mind a tinct of the soil and the clime which produced them. It is with varieties of style as with varieties of handwriting. There are great resemblances in these last ; family resemblances, resemblances from learning of the same master, and resemblances which result from unconscious imitation ; but they are all distinguishably different, and are in effect as unlike as they are alike. The diversities in prose are, indeed, somewhat less obvious than those in poetry ; and sometimes (as in purely didactic composition) require a practised ear and skill in critical analysis, to detect and express them. Sometimes they cannot be expressed—so minute and subtle are they.

but, where the compositions have any signal merit, they exist, and are felt, even if too refined to admit of being characterized in language. It is here much the same as in music, where every one feels and acknowledges the different style of composition in Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, though not one in a thousand could specify those differences, or describe them in words. Yet the difference is *felt* so strongly that an accomplished musician will scarcely mistake their compositions, even on a first hearing. But the difference between their strains, great as it is, is not greater than that between the prose of Milton and that of Johnson, between the prose of Burke and that of Addison ; and the critic who hears any considerable passages from these will be as little liable to mistake in referring the compositions to their proper authors.

A novice in criticism is apt to underrate greatly the interval, in point of merit, between different prose-compositions. He is apt to think that "plain prose," as he calls it, is much alike in all cases—standing on much the same level ; that it may be considered a sort of *any-how* mode of expressing our thoughts, or that it is simply a mode of expressing which is *not* metrical. He is little aware what a highly complex and artificial thing the best prose is after all. He little dreams of the toil and thought usually expended on composition before it assumes even an approximation to the ideal of the author, or before the artist will permit a

stranger to enter his studio. It may be true that apt thoughts will usually suggest apt words; but how often, on reconsideration, are those words exchanged for words which are found to be still more apt; how many changes of construction have been submitted to, in order to secure greater harmony or greater compactness; how many erasures, interlineations, and substitutions, have intervened between the first rough copy and the last printer's revise; how many corrections have been made in successive transcripts and successive proofs; how long has been the chase after a fugitive synonym; how have the cells of memory been ransacked and their contents tumbled out for one forgotten word! There is scarcely any limit to the improvements which a correct ear and a delicate taste, if time be given, may suggest; scarcely any point at which an author will acknowledge that he can effect no more. Johnson, when he had elaborately revised his early and often hasty papers in the "Rambler,"—and it must be acknowledged that they stood in need of it,—said to a lady who asked whether he could *now* improve any of them, "Yes, madam, I could make even the best of them better still." Burke, it is said, used to cover his manuscript with interlineations and alterations; and of some parts of his celebrated "Reflections" saw half-a-dozen proofs before he could satisfy himself. And he might have seen as many more before he failed to detect something which

he wished unsaid, or without having something suggested he would still like to say. Pascal, it is said, sometimes expended not less than twenty days on the perfecting and revisal of one of his immortal "Provincial Letters;" justifying the language of M. Faugère, that revision, with this great writer, was, as it were, a "second creation."

The celebrated Junius was almost as fastidious, and Robert Hall gave as one reason for his writing so little, that he could so rarely approach the realization of his own *beau-idéal* of a perfect style. Few things are more suggestive or instructive to a young writer than the inspection of *fac-similes* of the blotted and interlined originals of some of the celebrated passages of the great masters of style.

While it is true that one of the very excellences of prose consists in the entire absence of anything that shall even suggest the thought of *metre*, yet it has its characteristic music no less than poetry itself; not that, indeed, of the lyre or the lute—of measured movement and artificial cadence; but the wild and free, yet ever-pleasant and ever-varied, music of nature; of the whispering winds and rolling floods; the pathetic wail or passionate gusts of the Æolian harp; such music as is heard by the mountain streams or in the leafy woods of summer. Not less than poetry, it has its sweet and equable or its impetuous and rapid flow; its full and majestic harmonies; its abrupt transitions—

discords which make sweeter concord ; its impressive pauses ; its graceful, though not regularly recurring, cadences.

Such are the abstract capabilities of prose, though they are not always exhibited or often demanded from it. In general, no doubt, we demand in poetry a more exact attention to harmony of expression and a more elaborate and exquisite adaptation of the words to the thoughts. The connection between them is, in fact, more vital and indissoluble. Alter the words or the arrangement ever so little, and half the charm of a fine stanza is gone. It is true that this is partially the case with harmonious prose ; but it is not the case to anything like the same extent, or in half so many instances. To the poet's thoughts we may apply Milton's description of the union between music and poetry ; they are

“ Married to immortal verse.”

The strain of the poet may be compared with the strain of the musician, for the one as essentially depends on the language, as the other on the instrument which awakes it. The lay of the minstrel is spoilt, if but a chord of the lyre be broken.

Though the connection between thought and expression is not so close in prose as in poetry, it is still, in all prose of a high order, most intimate ; and the contrast between the best and the feeblest prose-compositions may be aptly illustrated by the image

which Campbell, in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, has employed, to mark the distinction between compositions in the classical languages and in our own. Speaking of the want of inflections in English, which deprives us of that varied collocation of words admissible in the languages of Greece and Rome, and also necessitates that abundant employment of particles,—for example, of prepositions and conjunctions,—which so often loads our style, he remarks, “Our modern languages may be compared to the art of carpentry in its rudest state, when the union of the materials employed by the artisan could be effected only by the help of those external and coarse implements, pins, nails, and cramps. The ancient languages resemble the same art in its most improved state, after the invention of dovetail joints, grooves, and mortices ; all the principal junctions being effected by forming properly the extremities or terminations of the pieces to be joined.” The similitude is certainly as apt if applied to examples of the best and worst prose in the *same* language.

In the instructive and amusing papers, inserted in *Good Words*, on “The Queen’s English,” we were warned of the danger, in these times of universal authorship and extensive international communication, of corrupting our noble language by incautiously adopting and circulating the impurities of diction, construction, and idiom, which are extensively afloat

in the literature of the day. Let these once obtain general currency, and by the laws of language, there is no longer any effectual appeal against them. The same theme was instructively dilated upon in an admirable article in the *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1864; and the dangers against which the writer warns us are certainly considerable.

Perhaps it may not be superfluous to remind the young writer, that if he would attain more than correctness, or even a fluent facility; if he would impress upon his compositions that individuality without which they cannot live, he must ever keep in mind that prose may be possessed of nearly as various excellence as poetry; and as much requires sedulous self-culture, profound meditation of the subject-matter, familiar acquaintance with the best models (models sufficiently numerous to prevent that mannerism which results from unconscious imitation, if there be too familiar converse with some one), and that "limæ labor," that patient revision, which is the condition of all excellence, literary or otherwise. Perhaps, considering the immense mass of written matter which is every day given to the world (and, *horribile dictu!* annually covering, if it were spread out, thousands of acres of printed thought), we ought rather to wonder that so much rises above mediocrity, than that so much falls below it.

VII.

ON PUBLIC EXECUTIONS.

THE hour is surely at hand when England must abolish either public executions, or capital punishments. If the latter, of course the former will vanish too ; but if capital punishments are to be retained, public executions must, in my judgment, cease. No inconsiderable party, as we all know, vehemently denounce all capital penalties ; and one of their most plausible arguments is derived from the enormous scandals and pernicious results of public executions. That these spectacles are attended by no advantages that can counterbalance their evils may be, I think, clearly shown ; nor by any advantage at all which may not be better attained in another way.

The nation has been slowly feeling its way to a conclusion on this subject ; but, if I do not greatly mistake, there are symptoms that it is now rapidly making up its mind. This is principally due to the

discussions of the public press ; and more especially to the painfully vivid photographs which its "Correspondents" have given us of the characteristics and incidents of execution scenes, for the last few years. These gentlemen have, for a few short hours, consented to visit hell, in order to reveal its horrors to the folks above ground,—who else could form no conception of them. Without their aid the mass of the people (who never frequent such spectacles), would not have had their minds sufficiently possessed of the facts, to form a judgment. But they must be stone blind and deaf too, if they cannot see the blasting vision which the Press flashed in their eyes, and hear the appalling sounds it thundered in their ears, at the execution of the late Francis Müller. It may be that the thing itself was not *much* worse than in the days of our forefathers ; and certainly we may gather from the pages of our older novelists, as Fielding and Smollett, and from the delineations of Hogarth, that the gallows was then, as now, a very questionable ally of the school or the pulpit, in spite of the encomiums in that behalf sometimes bestowed upon it. But Fielding and Smollett belonged to a past and less fastidious age ; and many took it for granted that the more hideous features of such scenes had been at least softened, if they had not vanished with the procession to Tyburn. The Pre-Raphaelite pictures which the press has, of late years, given of a public *hanging*,

have dissipated any such illusions, so far as they existed ; and have convinced the millions who never visit such a spectacle that the evil is all unchanged, or rather looks worse,—more ghastly and horrible,—in the light and by the contrast of a higher general civilization ; nay, probably *is* worse.

This last, indeed, may be reasonably inferred, whether we reason *à priori*, or look at facts. As for the latter ; probably there never was such a picture of a veritable Pandemonium,—of such utter and brutal insensibility to the tragedy of sin and death then enacting, but which those who looked on madly mistook for a comedy,—of such cool, deliberate election of evil in the very presence of the Nemesis which avenged it (as though that very circumstance gave vice and crime a distinct flavour and relish), as was exhibited in the reports of the daily papers, and especially in that most powerful letter in the *Times* on the occasion of Müller's execution.

Never perhaps was there a case in which the bolt of Divine Justice,—*zigzag* though it might for a moment, like the lightning which is its emblem,—more fully smote and shivered its victim ; never was there a case which better exemplified the impotence of the criminal to anticipate and secure all the unsuspected avenues by which his guilt may steal into light, or so to efface the scent of it, as to baffle the strong hounds of justice and prevent their getting on his track ;

never was there a case in which heaven and earth,—the laws of Providence, and the resources of human science which it impressed into its service,—more visibly conspired for the detection and punishment of guilt. Though the doomed man “took the wings of the morning and fled to the uttermost parts of the sea,” yet the stronger wing of justice had outflown him, and he found the Avenger already lying in wait for him in the very place of his refuge! And yet—and yet—that very hour of his execution, did the “synagogue of Satan” that assembled round the walls of Newgate, on November 14th, choose as a fitting time in which to show their contempt for all these “signs in the heavens above, and on the earth beneath.”*

It was as if the men were no longer—as men

* I justify such words by two or three sentences from the eye and ear witness of the *Times* :—“It was,” says he, “such a concourse as I hope may never again be assembled either for such a spectacle, or for the gratification of such lawless ruffianism as yesterday found scope around the gallows. . . . There can be only one thing more difficult than describing this crowd, and that is to *forget* it. . . . None but those who looked down upon the crowd of yesterday, will ever believe in the leisurely, open, broad-cast manner in which garrotting and highway robbery were carried on. . . . Such were the open pastimes of the mob from daylight till near the hour of execution.” “The impression, however,” speaking of the silence at the moment of execution itself, “if any it was, beyond that of mere curiosity, did not last for long; and before the slow, slight vibration of the body had well ended, violence, laughing, oaths, obscene conduct, and still more filthy language, reigned around the gallows far and near.”

generally are—befooled by a miscalculation of the future and blinded by present temptation ; but as if, with eyes wide open, they had deliberately said, “ Evil ! be thou my good ! ” and were determined to snatch a moment’s gross sin, even with the flames of hell itself flaring and glowing in their faces. It may be surmised, perhaps, that the bulk of them so behaved because they did not believe there is any hell at all. Not believe there is a hell ? They were *in* it ; they made part of it, at that moment ; for what hell can even a Dante or a Milton imagine worse than to be condemned to dwell in the midst of that seething caldron of obscenity, blasphemy, malignity, of all unutterable lawlessness and wickedness ? Utterly impotent seems the conclusion that there *can* be no such place as hell, while there are such scenes on earth ; or that the devil *must* be a nonentity, while we see so many demons incarnate : differing apparently from the more ethereal spirit of evil only by adding the grossest sensuality to every other form of lawlessness, as if to make good the oft-discredited miracle of the swine with the devils in them ! That most painfully vivid description by the *Times* correspondent is, if true (and it bore all marks of fidelity to facts), worse than any preceding page we ever read even in the annals of the gallows.

But that these scenes (if their horrors be not diminished by an advance of morals and religion that

shall be more than abreast of civilisation) will become more and more odious, may be inferred from the reason of the thing : they will not only *look* more hideous by contrast with civilisation, but *be* so ; for whereas (as shall be proved) these spectacles, especially in such an age as ours, must by inevitable necessity,—by force of an obvious law of moral affinities,—attract to them only the very worst elements of society, so those worst elements must needs be worse than can be found in a ruder and more primitive community. No men are so lost to good as those whose intellect has been developed only to become the bonds slave of the passions ; who have borrowed from civilisation little but the art of masking evil, and of converting knowledge into cunning ; who superadd to the dangerous, but still blind and honest, ferocity of the brute, somewhat of the subtlety and malignity of a fiend. Civilisation and knowledge are themselves, like logic and rhetoric, simply *instrumental* ; and are indifferent to the moral and immoral uses to which they may be put. But they are, at least, the more *natural* allies of goodness and virtue ; and when divorced from them, and wedded to vice and crime, form a solecism in nature. When they are so conjoined, they breed forms of evil such as the poor savage can, happily, never aspire to emulate. It is as though one added the wings of the eagle to the venom of the serpent, or

armed the jaw of the lion with the fang of the rattlesnake.

Both from fact and from the reason of the thing, therefore, it may be inferred that these spectacles have grown, and must still grow, worse instead of better. And can England, for very shame, endure their continuance? Will she periodically permit in her capital and in her great cities a spectacle which by necessity of nature (as will be shown) calls forth from congenial darkness, from every obscure den and hiding-place where they lie scattered and ordinarily latent, every loathsome reptile form of vice and crime, to crawl and swelter in the blaze of day? Will she persist in every now and then raking all the social ordure into one rotting heap, the pestilential reek of which shames the light and poisons the air, and reminds us of the apocalyptic vision of the smoke that issued from the bottomless pit? Will she continue thus to collect all that is lost to shame, as if on purpose to enable it to defy authority, to mock at decency and modesty, to jeer at everything venerable or awful, and to seize that very moment in which the Law is vindicating its claims, for showing contempt of all law, human and divine, by breaking it at the gallows' foot? We have heard a great deal lately about the *utilisation* of our sewage: we know not how *this* sewage is to be utilised; but assuredly to let all the filth of London drain into the Thames is a far less

disgrace to our civilisation than to persist in making the Old Bailey a periodical cesspool for all the moral abominations of London.

We are told that nothing in "the shape of decency or modesty or respectability" appeared in the crowd, that was not immediately victimised, insulted, "bonneted," robbed, and in case of resistance (which, however, was utterly hopeless,—as though the whole thing was designed to be the triumph of lawlessness, and not the vindication of law), knocked down and brutally maltreated. It is not very easy, perhaps, to imagine "Modesty, Decency, or Respectability" taking their pleasure then and there; and one almost feels inclined to say, that if they did, they richly deserved their fate. The best that can be said for the best there, is, that they went to gratify a peculiar *goût*, an eccentric appetite for "game," not only "high," but putrid. Now if men will have such venison, even though they cook it by hell fire, they may be thankful if they only scorch their fingers.

For the inestimable service conferred by the press on this occasion, I think the public deeply indebted; and I cannot but hope that the scene of November 14th, and the comments upon it, will soon bring public sentiment on this subject to flood tide.

I was anxious to see what comment the *Times* would make on this letter of its correspondent. In one half of the article I entirely concur, namely, that

the scene, painful as it was, did not prove that capital punishments ought to be abolished: for which opinion, nevertheless, as it truly said, it would be made an argument. But I must confess, that the other half, in which it seemed to argue that, since it was necessary to retain capital punishment, it was a just corollary that public executions must be retained also (all such scenes notwithstanding), by no means convinced me. It does not seem to me that the alternative offered is the only one; and if we may judge by the recent "presentments" of the Grand Jury for Lancashire, and many other symptoms, a large portion of the public is coming to the same conclusion.

But before proceeding to canvass this point I should like to say a few words on the *certainly*, in the nature of things, that public executions must be productive of evil, of evil always, and of evil only.

The arguments of those who plead for the entire abolition of capital punishment are certainly not without weight and plausibility; though I cannot but think they derive their force from extrinsic considerations (as for example, among others, the scandal of public executions), rather than from any intrinsic validity. Assuredly it is not possible to attach much importance to that of Voltaire,—that "when a man is once hanged, he is good for nothing;" for unhappily

he is often worth nothing before. But though the arguments for the abolition may not be very cogent, the condition of public opinion may make them irresistible. As I said in the *Edinburgh Review*, twenty years ago—"It is very possible that an impression of the inexpediency of inflicting the punishment in question may diffuse itself so widely, as to render it necessary for the legislature to abolish it. That time is possibly yet distant; but should it come, the experiment must be tried. Anything is better than an uncertainty of obtaining convictions. A milder punishment *certainly* inflicted, is better than one which would be more effectual, if it cannot be inflicted at all; to say nothing of the demoralizing effect of the spectacle of juries deliberately violating one or other of two imagined obligations. In this point of view, any system of legislation must accommodate itself to the actual state of the people, nor presume to be in advance of those who administer it."*

It is therefore of importance, if capital punishments are to be retained at all, that all plausible objections against them should be removed. One of these is the enormous scandal of public executions; such, indeed, that if these could not be abolished without abolishing capital punishments too, I should be instantly converted into an advocate of the latter measure. The evil, if any evil followed, could at best be but tempo-

* *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1847.

rary ; for if it were found, by the resistless logic of statistics, that murders increased upon us, there is not a philanthropist, however sentimental or fanatical, who would not call aloud for the re-enactment of the capital penalty. As long as it is supposed that no more murders would be committed than at present, those who have no eyes to see anything but guilt and its wretchedness, and are blind to the *innocent* wretchedness which guilt has caused, flatter themselves that life would not be less secure than it is now. But if they found themselves mistaken, even they would yield to facts. There is not a man, surely, of so perverse a sympathy with crime, so misanthropically philanthropic, as deliberately to consent that the innocent should have their throats cut rather than that the murderer should be hanged.

But I apprehend that the time is not come, when we are called upon to consider any such alternative as that of the suppression of capital punishment altogether. While people are pretty well agreed that it should be restricted to cases of clear murder, or of such crimes as involve *constructive* murder of the coolest kind,—they yet are also pretty well agreed that in such cases this punishment should be retained, as the only absolute security to society against those who have once broken into the sanctuary of life. They maintain that such a penalty is clearly sanctioned by the law of God ; they know it is defended

by almost every jurist of eminence ; they believe it to be fully justified, and indeed necessitated, by the interests of humanity.

And if society must have an absolute guarantee that a murderer shall do no more mischief, I do not see that there is any difference worth speaking of, between those who would continue and those who would abolish capital punishment. For if these last would in fact take *absolute* security on behalf of society against the repetition of the crime, then the only conceivable alternative of capital punishment is that of inflicting solitary imprisonment for life ; and this, in fact, comes, in the generality of cases, but in a less merciful way, to the same thing. It is in truth capital punishment of the most hideous kind.

All *à priori* reasoning, physiological science, experiment, alike show that such a life soon becomes a living death ; it is attended by the gradual and not very tardy extinction of the functions and faculties by which alone man can be truly said to live at all. You cannot reverse all the conditions of human existence, cut off man from all the vitalizing influences of the society of his fellows, doom him to the absolute monotony and silence of a prison cell, without, in the majority of cases, superinducing insanity or idiotism. You can no more do it, without touching the vital functions, than you can keep the eye in perpetual darkness without destroying the power of

vision. Under such a punishment, those very faculties of man's moral and intellectual nature, for the sake of which alone this equivocal mercy is contended for, become useless. The difference is one simply as to the mode of death; whether it is better to die by an acute or chronic disease. It is a choice between killing by inches, and killing at once; between laying the axe at the root of the tree, or lopping off its branches, barking and "girdling" it, and leaving it to perish by gradual decay. To condemn man to absolute and perpetual solitude, is to doom him to that last calamity which Deán Swift so dreaded for himself when he stood gazing at a tree whose upper parts were dead: "I shall be like that tree," said he, "I shall die a-top." To kill man thus is indeed worse than simply killing him; for it is to bury him while he is alive.

For these reasons, an advocate of capital punishment, in the extreme case of murder, may justly contend for it, not merely because it is the most just, or the most severe, or the most dreaded,—though it *is* so (τὸ τῶν φοβερῶν φοβερώτατον, as an ancient said),—but because it is a more *merciful* penalty than would be inflicted by those who, without meaning death, do really decree it,—only sentencing to a slow fire, instead of the rope or the guillotine. While I respect that comprehensive philanthropy which compassionates suffering of all kinds, I cannot for a moment admit that this mode of treating murderers

would be the wisest expression of it, or at all more merciful than hanging. *This* philanthropy does not look far enough. It can see the gallows, and it sees nothing else. That life should be taken by the hangman in a moment is in its eyes a dreadful thing ; but the horror of taking life by small doses of a subtle poison, of letting the life slowly ebb away,—this it does not picture to itself. But to him who has the imagination adequately to conceive it, there will be no comparison between the gallows and the solitary cell for life ; between instantaneous extinction and a perennial death. I for one say, therefore, Give the murderer, while his faculties are still vigorous, what time you will for repentance, and all needful instruction and exhortation to bring him to it ; but in *mercy* spare him that long decay to which you must doom him, if you must exact for society effectual guarantees against further mischief, and yet will not hang him. Let him not, like Swift's tree, "begin to die a-top."

But to return to the subject of public executions. The analogies which were formerly resorted to (and not altogether abandoned yet), to prove the benefits that may result from public executions, may without difficulty be shown to be altogether fallacious. It is sometimes said, "Does not the schoolmaster, now and then at all events, summon the entire school to witness the punishment of some notorious and signal

offender?" Very true; but not to mention that *exceptio probat regulam*, and that a humane and wise schoolmaster generally punishes privately, as conceiving that it will be likely to have a better effect both on the delinquent and his companions, is there any analogy at all in the case?

If the *whole public could be compelled* to witness public executions, then the analogy would be complete. But, to make out the parallel in the case chosen for illustration, what ought we to find? What ought to be the conduct of a schoolmaster when he flogs a boy? Why, he ought to tell the urchins, "That it was not *compulsory* on any of them to attend; but that if any of them would *like* to attend, they were welcome to do so!" And what would be the consequence? Why, if any of them felt a morbid curiosity for dreadful sights, or a dangerous love of strong sensations, or an odious love of seeing suffering, or a more odious delight in inflicting it, or lack of kindness, or a hope of seeing authority bravely defied, or a wish to encourage an incorrigible offender by sympathy,—such, but such alone, would be there. You would be sure to find there the young Domitian, who was fond of stripping flies of their legs or wings, or thrusting pins through cockchafers, and who was diligently qualifying himself by such essays for a graduation in deeper cruelty. You would have the boy who was himself always getting into scrapes,

who had often been under the dread "Flagellifer" himself, and who would feel a sort of malicious consolation in seeing another under the same punishment. You would have the young despot whose pastime it was to play tyrannical tricks upon the younger boys, and who delighted in their terrors at his approach ; to see a companion flogged would be an enjoyment of a similar and stronger kind. You would have him who was a ringleader in every act of rebellion, and who denounced all just authority as tyranny : he would go for the purpose of seeing whether his companion would "die game ;" and, if opportunity offered, would encourage him beforehand (and perhaps by secret signals at the time) to a desperate resistance, or at all events a dogged fortitude, and a noble resolution not to play the part of a sneaking penitent. You would have the boy who was himself in danger of the same punishment, or perhaps had been an accomplice in that very fault which provoked it, but who had not been detected ;—drawn to the sight by a kind of horrible fascination, and drawn one step nearer to the crime, too, both by familiarity with the punishment and the fact that he *knew* it was possible to escape it ; but especially if he saw the chastisement, and the authority that ordained it, made the subject—as it would be in such a choice circle of spectators—of ribald jest or bullying defiance. And to make the parallel complete, if any

lad had a propensity to pilfer, you would probably have him taking that opportune moment of abstracted attention on the part of his companions, to exercise his youthful adroitness ! In a word, you would find that whatever in the school was base, selfish, hard-hearted, malignant, cruel, disposed to plot or to encourage rebellion against authority, would be there ; and nothing but that. None who had the faintest tinct of good-nature, fine intellect, amiable temper, kindly sympathy, would ever dream of accepting so curious an invitation. Their attendance must be *compulsory*, if they are to come at all.

It is possible, indeed (if all were *compelled* to be present), to conceive exceptional cases, in which the public punishment of some signal crime might do no harm, even if it did no good. But, not to insist that in general those who would be likely to be benefited by the spectacle—that is, who came with dispositions *capable* of instruction—would know their lesson very well without conning it at the gallows or the triangle, nothing can be more absurd than to make attendance *optional*, and so insure that only those shall be there who will *not* be benefited ! If any persons whatever be likely to be benefited, it is a necessary condition that they should be *made* to attend ; for nothing but a sense of duty or necessity will induce well-disposed people to go at all. Such people do not go to a hanging of free choice.

Now it need not be said that compulsory attendance at a public execution is utterly out of the question.

So much for the *analogy* in question. The plan on which the public hangman gathers his spectators is just on such a principle as we have supposed our wise schoolmaster to act upon !

To all who *like* such sights, the legislature in effect says, "Come and see ; all you who dislike them, stay away." And the result is just what we might expect, and just what we find.

Similar remarks apply to the case of military flogging, and of all public punishments. If all attend, the result is still perhaps problematical ; for the natural horror of seeing extreme suffering—no matter what the crime committed—generally awakens, for the time at all events, such invincible and involuntary sympathy of pity and terror, that it drowns the sense of guilt in compassion. But if none came but those who chose to come, we know just what sort of people alone *would* come ; and the result would be the same as in the imagined school. Only those who were already hard-hearted, brutal, lawless, and cruel ; at best, the victims of a morbid curiosity, and a love of strong sensations,—which in themselves are moral failings, and require to be checked, not indulged, else they infallibly lead to something worse,—would be there. The highest motive—and that would be low

enough—would be the wish to see with how much fortitude extreme agony could be borne, or with how much bravado just authority might be defied.

And this reasoning, duly considered, shows the gross practical fallacy in which the very conception of the possible benefits of public executions (if attendance be optional) originates. It involves a fundamental mistake in the philosophy of human nature. *Voluntarily* to gaze on suffering—when there is nothing to be done, and when no active effort is to be made to relieve it ; or where there is no overbearing law which compels us, though it be painful, to encounter the sight as an unwelcome necessity,—as, for example, when a physician or surgeon looks with a dry eye on the agonies of his patient, or a school or a regiment is impartially compelled (like it or not) to witness what makes the heart shudder,—is always and simply a symptom of a hard heart, and helps further to harden it. All voluntary sight of suffering, except on the conditions of necessity or benevolence, implies previous cruelty and callousness of nature ; or, if there be nothing more at first than a morbid curiosity, it is sure, if the thing be repeated, to pass into something worse. We here see fearfully exemplified that law of human nature which Butler has done so much to make clear, though he was not the first who announced it ; for the germ of his observations may be found in Aristotle. But the principle itself is of the last im-

portance in relation to all education, and not least in relation to the subject now under consideration. It is this ; that all our passive emotions are weakened by repetition ; and yet of course follow the law of all our habits, and crave, if indulged, increasing frequency of gratification. Now, if they have led on to the strengthening of a correspondent *practical habit* (which such emotions seem principally designed to develop within us), this weakening is of little consequence. Thus the sight of suffering naturally excites the emotion of pity ; and if that pity can and will do anything for the relief of the sufferer then it has answered its purpose ; for indeed “the heart is made better” by it. Nor does it matter that the mere emotion decays in vividness at each repetition,—even till a surgeon, for example, can perform an operation as coolly as he eats his breakfast,—if the practical habit of benevolence has strengthened in proportion ; for this last will then prompt us, with far greater power than any passive emotion could, to do the offices of pity. A Howard may look upon scenes with a stoical composure, nay, with a seeming hard-heartedness, which at first dissolved him in tears, and set about the work of relieving them as if he were made of marble, while his benevolence all the while is growing stronger and deeper. And thus, too, a physician may look on a patient’s death-bed, nay, on a thousand in a year, and be none the worse for it.

But if he who neither *could* nor *would* do anything for the relief of suffering, were continually thrusting himself into every dying man's chamber to which he could get access, for the mere purpose of prying into its horrors,—even though his motive at first might possibly be nothing worse than a morbid curiosity,—how would it fare with him? If he persisted in such an abominable propensity, if he pampered this “canine appetite” for the garbage of fancy, it is impossible that he should not exemplify the above law of our “passive emotions:” the habit would speedily generate something much worse than mere curiosity, would at last obliterate, by repetition, the capacity of pity, and, in a word, transform the man into a veritable *ghoul*. The mere fact that no good man would willingly look on sufferings except an imperious law or an instinct of benevolence made it a duty, however painful, at once condemns our present practice of gathering those, and those only, to the spectacle of public executions, who come of their own accord. It leaves us in no degree surprised that the gracious invitation should be responded to as it now is; it gives us just such an assemblage as might be expected. All the scum and offscouring of society (barring an eccentric creature here and there who has a diseased fancy for “supping full of horrors,” and who, like a late notorious person, would sooner go to an execution than a banquet) flock to the scene

as naturally as vulture to carrion. Is there anybody who can for a moment be imagined to have any justifiable motive for voluntarily going to such a spectacle, or any motive at all which does not make him odious? If so, it is the man who can say (if any *can* say), "I am going to see this sight, honestly and sincerely, from no idle feeling of curiosity, still less from any cruel desire to gloat on suffering; but that I may have my own heart more impressed with the dreadful effects of crime, and be better guarded against the possible temptations to commit it!" But is there one in a million of the spectators who could honestly say this? And if he said it, is there one in ten millions who would believe him? Would not every one say, "This worthy man, if he can truly say that he went to learn such lesson, had *already* learned it, and might have stayed away. His heart is already sufficiently guarded against temptation, in *wishing* to be guarded."

But further; if there be any force in the argument that *public* executions are calculated to impress the spectator with the terrible consequences of crime, and so deter him from its commission, then the same reasoning will apply to *all* penal inflictions. Why restrict it to capital punishment? Nay, one would think *à fortiori* that some other punishments, especially those in which much and prolonged corporeal suffering is involved, might make a deeper and more

powerful impression than the transient convulsion, endured in silence and with covered face, of the poor wretch whose limbs quiver for a moment, and are then still for ever. It might be thought that the contortions and shrieks of a man under the lash would produce far more horror,—as indeed they ever will ; even *such* horror that none but one who is compelled to take part in such scenes—unless he be already utterly hard-hearted, or on the high road to it—can endure it ; horror, which in every one not so fortified, either by duty or by brutality, becomes uncontrollable agony. However, as far as this argument goes, it will certainly apply, if it apply at all, to *all* punishment. It follows therefore that we should throw our prison doors open—like our churches—for moral impression ; and in fact proceed just as we do at public executions ; that is, compel nobody, but invite all who have any *taste* for that sort of thing to inspect the prisoners during punishment ; to come and gaze with a curious, or philosophic, or edified mind at the criminals on the treadmill (as at squirrels in their cage), or under the tortures of the lash !

Yet, strange to say ! if the reasoning which represents public executions as an instructive spectacle be sound, we are so far from believing it applicable in other cases, that we have legislated in utter defiance of it. We have been, and are still retrograding. We have abolished a number of these improving spectacles,

once highly popular, as well as the punishments which supplied them ; as the pillory, the stocks, and flogging at the cart's tail. It will be said, perhaps, that these were abolished principally because they were presumed to have a pernicious effect on the criminal himself, and only made him worse than before. But this was not the only or the chief reason for the abolition of some of these punishments,—more especially the pillory ; nor is it easy indeed to comprehend (what some sentimental prison-reformers have now and then affirmed) that the *indignity* of receiving personal chastisement can much debase one who has already reconciled himself to the practice of putting his hands into his neighbour's till or snatching his watch out of his fob ! But, whether it be so or not, this was not the principal reason for the abolition of such public punishments. The thing chiefly thought of was the effect they produced on the spectators, and that in two ways. First, they excited undue sympathy with the criminal, and thus counteracted the design of exemplary punishment ;—as in that case of flogging the thief at Olney, so humorously described by Cowper, where the “ pitiful lass ” of Silver End boxed the ears of the “ pitiless constable,” and the constable chastised the too pitiful beadle, and the beadle *pretended* to chastise the thief, and where the only person who suffered nothing was the thief himself. Secondly, they were alleged to produce that very evil, which is some-

how converted into a good in the case of public executions ! that is, to collect, by the very nature of the lure, that class of spectators who form the very dregs of the population, and to make them more brutal, more contemptuous of law, and more familiar with crime, than they were before. And therefore, though we still have some corporeal punishments, and have recently and not unwisely re-enacted them, in relation to certain signally atrocious crimes, as garotting and the wanton injury of public property, (a punishment which there is little hazard in saying will be found more effectually deterrent than any other), we wisely dispense with *publicity* in the infliction. Why we should not do so in the case of hanging, after so long experience of the brutalising effects of the spectacle, it is hard to say.

It is curious to see how very little is said on the subject treated in the present essay, by the great writers on jurisprudence. In vain do we search their copious discussions for any adequate treatment of the expediency or otherwise of public executions. In vain shall we search Beccaria ; in vain Montesquieu or Blackstone ; or the copious dissertation on punishments by Michaelis in the fourth volume of his “Laws of Moses.” As little is said in the great work of Bentham, or of his translator, Dumont. If these writers consider the effect of public punishment on the spectators, it is still simply with a view to the

reformation of the criminal code itself ; with the view of pointing out, for example, the inexpediency of punishments which by their excessive or disproportionate severity, or revolting character, destroy any *salutary* effects of the spectacle ; excite a sympathy with the criminal, bring the law into odium, or quench all sense of justice in the sentiment of horror or compassion. But barring any such effects, all these writers seem to take it for granted that the spectacle itself, if the punishment be but just, *may be* an edifying one. None of them seems to have computed the entire moral effects upon the public, which a purely *voluntary* resort to see a hanging implies ; or to see that, as by a necessary law, the evil elements of the social body, and none other, must gravitate thither.

It is true that these writers had something else, and more immediately pressing, to think of ;—the revision and amelioration of the criminal code itself ; the removal of those hideous anomalies, those cruel and disproportionate penalties, which then disgraced every statute-book in Europe. And one and all in different degrees nobly contributed to this result ; in one and all, principles and maxims are laid down which in due time bore fruit, and led on at length to the enlightened legislation which did so much for both humanity and justice. Slowly, however, did the light spread ; and it is almost comic to see Blackstone sorrowfully acknowledging that no less than 160 “actions,” according

to the letter of the English law, came under the head of "felony," and exposed their perpetrators to capital punishment, and yet on the same page congratulating the reader that our penal code contrasts favourably with that of some other countries !

Dr. Johnson, according to Boswell, even went so far as to deplore the abolition of the edifying procession to Tyburn, and to express grave fears lest the omission of that time-honoured custom should leave the people with one instructive admonition the less ! "He said to Sir William Scott : 'The age is running mad after innovation ; and all the business of the world is to be done in a new way ; men are to be hanged in a new way : Tyburn itself is not safe from the fury of innovation.' When it was argued that this was an improvement—'No, sir,' said he, eagerly, 'it is *not* an improvement. They object that the old method drew together a number of spectators. Sir, executions are intended to draw spectators. If they do not draw spectators, they don't answer their purpose. The old method was most satisfactory to all parties ; the public was gratified by a procession, the criminal was supported by it. Why is all this to be swept away ?' 'I perfectly agree with Dr. Johnson,' very needlessly adds the Boswellian echo, 'on this head ; and am persuaded that executions now, the solemn procession being discontinued, have not nearly the effect which they formerly had. Magistrates, both

in London and elsewhere, have, I am afraid, in this had too much regard to their own ease.' ”*

So slowly do even great minds give up a prejudice founded on custom ! For if ever there was a spectacle which one would suppose might be dropped without causing a sigh to anybody, it was surely *that*. Whether we take the descriptions of novelists, dramatists, or historians, nothing could be more brutalising to the populace than that “dance of death” to Tyburn. But habit can reconcile us to anything ; and thus Johnson could view the very *abuses* of the ancient custom as among its *uses* ! “The populace is *gratified* by it—the criminal *supported* !” as if either the one or the other entered into the original end of it. He speaks, with as little consciousness of the absurdity of his words, as the gaoler of a county prison felt, when, being asked how many he could hang on his new *drop*, he replied, “Why, sir, we *can* six ; but four will hang *comfortably* !”

Yet it would be most unfair, while adverting to this odd freak of Johnson’s logic, not to mention that he was one of the very foremost in advocating the reform of the criminal law, by pointing out, with all his wonderful force of thought, the self-defeating effects of the severity of the existing code, both as exciting sympathy with the criminal and preventing the injured from prosecuting. There are few things in any of the

* “Boswell’s Johnson,” vol. viii. p. 179.

professed writers on penal legislation more convincing or more powerful than No. 114 of the "Rambler." He there says, "The frequency of capital punishments rarely hinders the commission of crime, but naturally and commonly prevents its detection; and is, if we proceed only on prudential principles, chiefly for that reason to be avoided." And speaking of the inequality of punishments, he powerfully says, "They who would rejoice at the correction of a thief, are yet shocked at the thought of destroying him. His crime shrinks to nothing compared with his misery; and severity defeats itself by exciting pity."

Similar reasonings were put forth by his great contemporary Burke, in his plea for limiting the number of executions in the case of the Lord George Gordon Riots.* Such great writers as these, and the illustrious jurists already mentioned, sowed the seed which slowly, but surely, bore fruit, and at length led to an effectual revision of our penal code by the glorious labours of such men as Romilly, Macintosh, and their contemporaries. If they had lived to our day,—however desirous they might be to retain capital punishment in the case of murder,—they would assuredly have pleaded for the abolition of public executions.

The conviction that the effects of these odious exhibitions are in the immense majority of cases simply

* "Reflections on the approaching Executions." Works, vol. ix.

pernicious, has long been gaining ground ; and probably few would now defend them on the plea that they are calculated to excite a wholesome moral impression ; or that they may be what some of our older writers fondly deemed them,—a sort of sermon, only preached from the gallows instead of the pulpit ! Nearly fifty years ago the minute inquiries made by the Committee who drew up the important “ Report on the Criminal Laws ” (1819) tended to show that the effect of public executions was very problematical ; and an able writer canvassing the minutes of the Report, and particularly questioning the expediency of entering at all into *this* question, yet virtually comes to the same conclusion at which the Commission had tacitly arrived. He says—“ With regard to public executions, we believe that in all ages and countries, the good effects produced upon those whom curiosity has collected to witness them have been extremely limited.”

The great and palmary argument *now* insisted upon, but which really seems very inconclusive, is that public executions give us the only effectual guarantee for the sentence of the law being actually carried out ! It is not easy to imagine any real difficulty in the matter in a free country like our own. If, indeed, our Government were a mere despotism ; if the officials charged with administering it could enact the horrors of the Neapolitan prisons or of the old Spanish Inqui-

sition, there would be good reason for this excessive scrupulosity. But is there the shadow of any such danger in England? Do we not, under a system of complete responsibility to Parliament and People, confidingly invest the Government with the most enormous powers,—powers involving the most comprehensive social interests in a thousand forms,—without even dreaming that there will be the slightest ground to question the probity, however we may often question the wisdom, of those who administer it? Do we not give to our statesmen, judges, and public officials of all kinds, power which nothing prevents being abused in countless ways, but their public character and the consciousness that they are amenable on the faintest suspicion to public investigation and the severest penalties?—And is it conceivable that while we do all this, and without a scruple, the depositions and signatures of the sheriff, the gaol authorities, and (if you like to make assurance doubly sure) those of a commission of six or eight gentlemen, would not be deemed a sufficient security that the sentence of the law on a few miserable criminals had been duly carried out? If so, why do we *now* intrust to the hands of the proper authorities the administration of the far greater part of our penal machinery? Why do we not demand that the treatment and punishment of criminals in general should be freely open to public inspection?

Nor does the present system, as its advocates admit, secure absolute certainty in the matter. Even now, if the authorities empowered to carry out the law were really inclined to enter into a daring conspiracy to defeat it, success would not be impossible : and indeed rumour says that, in one or two instances, such a nefarious attempt to defraud justice has been actually made. Nor would it perhaps be impracticable, if *all* those on whom it devolves to manage the execution were such miscreants as such a conspiracy would imply. At the distance at which the rabble sees the victim, very few can be sure that he is the man ; fewer could swear to his identity ; and perhaps among those who are in a position distinctly to see his features, there may not be one to whom he is known.

Again, what is meant by a public guarantee that the law has been carried out ? The term “publicity” is relative. Very few,—indeed a mere scantling of the population,—do in fact see an execution ; and as to their *character*, certainly, if it came to a contest of testimony, one is inclined to say that the depositions and signatures of a respectable Commission, certifying that the deed was done, would weigh more, not only than the impressions, but the oaths of a million of such wretches as gathered themselves together in the front of Newgate on the morning of November 14th ; not to mention that there is not the smallest reason to believe that those who go to such spectacles go for

the purpose of ascertaining that justice is done, or the *proper* person hanged, or even think of the question of identity at all. They trust all that, (as the nation would do, if the thing were devolved on duly qualified officials) to the common sense, honesty, and known responsibility of the officials themselves. I cannot say, therefore, that I am much moved with the argument that it would be difficult to convince people, under the system of a Commission solemnly appointed for the purpose, that the condemned criminal had been hanged ; and that some supposititious corpse, or illusory phantasm, or stuffed *effigies* of a man had not been juggled into his place. It may be safely said that there is not one man in a million who would pretend that he had a grain of doubt that the law had been duly vindicated. To take guarantees that a Commission, so constituted, had not all perjured themselves, would seem to most people as absurd as to "place guards on the outposts of possibility itself."

If we can take guarantees, as assuredly we may, that the sentence of the law shall be rigidly and impartially carried out within the prison walls, though in the presence of the proper officials alone, there can hardly be a doubt that such a mode of execution would make a far deeper impression, not only on the criminal himself, but on the criminal class generally. As to the former : the false supports which so often buoy him up, at all events prevent his fully realising

his position, would be struck from under him. He would no longer be distracted by the thought of either a sympathetic or an infuriated crowd. It would put an end to the illusion of that shameful "glory" which has made so many criminals die with bravado when in the presence of a vast multitude, and, above all, under the eye of the criminal class itself. That "notoriety" which makes the man for a moment the "observed of all observers," though it be but on the gallows, and which so many a criminal mistakes for fame, will no longer, to use Johnson's expression, "support" him.

On the other hand, if he be really penitent, or sincerely disposed to concentrate his mind on his terrible position, he will not be distracted (as many have been) in his last moments, by hearing the yells and bellowings of a riotous crowd just outside his prison.

It is, perhaps, impossible in the nature of things that he can feel his true condition, if he be made the object of attention to a vast multitude. Even if they all hate and loathe him, they will still *divide* his thoughts. If there be any sympathy, though it be only that of his own criminal class, it will be an argument for maintaining an air of callous hardihood; and if there be absolutely none—a rare case!—false shame will as often provoke sullen defiance of his fate as any better feeling.

But if compelled to take the dark journey thus

isolated from his fellows ; or with none to see him but the inflexible witnesses of his death, with inexorable, however compassionate, looks bent upon him, he would be far more likely to be properly affected. It would be with him, as it often is with the debauchee, who talks, with hardy insolence, of death and futurity amidst his boon companions and over his cups, but who usually grows tame enough when God has him face to face, in the loneliness of a sick chamber, and in his dying hour.

As to the people generally :—I firmly believe that the very imagination of death inflicted upon the criminal in the privacy of a prison,—the awe and mystery which would be associated with that terrible and silent scene, would more powerfully affect them than the heterogenous reminiscences of a public execution can do. It is one of those cases in which the imagination, acting with single concentrated energy, outdoes the effect of a many-coloured and distracting reality. Such a doom would carry with it much of the terror with which the secret “*Vehmgerichte*” were invested, only dissociated from all suspicion of injustice and irresponsibility on the part of the Judges.

Even under the most favourable circumstances—that is, in a more primitive state of society than our own—it would perhaps be impossible to render public executions salutary. If they ever are so, it can only be when the people in general are less refined ; when

the spectacle does not attract, as it must do with us, the bad alone; and perhaps we may add, when the criminal classes are not (as they are sure to be if they have become such in the midst of civilisation) so callous to moral impression, or, as many would say, so superior to all superstition! Of the difficulty of making these spectacles simply edifying, even to the most moral population, we have a curious and scarcely credible instance (even if we allow for the well-known effects of epidemic enthusiasm), in a work published about sixty years ago. In Denmark, it seems, according to M. Catteau, the prisoner was conducted from the prison with such attractive solemnities, and was treated to so charming a sermon just before he was hanged, that the spectacle itself, and all the pious care bestowed upon the culprit, turned the heads of the common people, some of whom committed murder on purpose to secure so efficacious a *viaticum*; and the Government was compelled to make hanging less seductive in order to correct this eccentric ambition!

Few will apprehend there is danger of any similar phenomena among ourselves. I presume the most eloquent sermon which the most eloquent Ordinary of Newgate ever preached, the most winning and persuasive tones in which he ever exhorted penitence to make an edifying end, could not lure any of our *non*-criminal classes to commit murder, in order to be the flattered object of such eloquence, or enjoy the

benefit of such surpassing spiritual consolations. But, for the *criminal* class itself, it would perhaps not be irrational to fear lest the apparently edifying departure which so many great malefactors make, the sudden transfiguration which they undergo under the manipulation of ghostly hands, the readiness with which they are transformed from reprobates to saints, and the sort of canonisation which the rabble incontinently bestows upon them, should operate upon the minds of some among them ;—forming one bribe the more to the commission of crimes which, if detected and punished, will yet issue in a repentance so easy and an exit so edifying. Murder will but insure to the culprit spiritual aid and skill of the most approved and seemingly efficacious sort ; make locks of his hair and fragments of his clothes precious in the eyes of the mob as the relics of a martyr, and qualify him to die in the “odour of sanctity.” In sober truth, some of the representations we have read of the last moments of criminals may well make some who are on the same road imagine, that the gallows is not only about the easiest path to death, but the shortest way to heaven also !

Heartily do I agree with the editor of the *Times*—though I cannot see with him the necessity of retaining public executions at all—that the subject is well worthy of “the attention of the Commission” which is now considering the whole subject of Capital

Punishment ;”* for the spectacles in question are not only a foul blot on our civilisation, but present scenes of which the grossest barbarism would be ashamed. They are the mere Saturnalia of Sin, Death, and Hell.†

* See Appendix (A).

† The *Times* thinks that London may perhaps demand *exceptional* legislation in this matter. But the evil is much the same everywhere. The scenes at Stafford on the 27th of December last, were nearly as odious as those in London on November 14th (1864).

VIII.

REPORT OF "A DIALOGUE ON STRIKES
AND LOCK-OUTS."

WHO has not often found himself an attentive—though perhaps, as in my own case, a silent—member of one of those little self-elected Parliaments, extemporised at a dinner party after the ladies have retired ; a parliament, in which difficult and profound questions of politics shall be discussed, with almost as much wisdom and eloquence as in St. Stephen's itself !

I was present the other day on such an occasion. The debate turned on that momentous subject, "Strikes and Lock-outs ;" and, as an odd "dream" of one of the party (involving the supposition that *other* classes besides working men and their employers resorted to similar measures) seemed to set not only the measureless absurdity, but, socially considered, even the criminality of all such barbarous methods of settling trade disputes in a somewhat new light, a tolerably correct "Report" of this "Debate" may not be uninteresting to the reader ; and I do not care

if I play Hansard on the occasion. The conversation took place at the house of a wealthy merchant, one of the many men among us who by strong native sense and energy of character, have not only compensated many defects of early education, but to a good extent cultivated their own minds in intervals of leisure, and by industry and perseverance, forced their way to opulence and social position. Among the guests were two or three manufacturers of the neighbourhood, one of whom had not only been making money, but learning "philosophy" also, "among the spindles," for some forty years, and who took a principal part in the conversation. There were two clergymen, both intelligent men, one in the established church, the other out of it, and who, however they might have differed touching "Church and State," sang in perfect time and tune the woeful mischiefs which two or three long and memorable strikes had wrought among their respective flocks; while a physician and a lawyer who were also of the party expatiated, the one on the increase of disease and the other on the increase of crime, engendered by the dissipation and destitution which had flowed from the same causes. Add to these an amiable and intelligent young man, the son of our host, who had received an excellent education, was well read in political economy, and (as it was whispered) was looking forward one day to a seat in Parliament. He was, as young men are apt to be,

rather advanced in politics; a strenuous advocate of the *laissez faire* principle, desirous of a large extension of the franchise, and disposed to make the working classes his clients. He warmly defended their "rights," and among the rest the *right* to "strike" as often as the humour seized them; but also, as he frankly added, their *right* to bear the penalty of so doing. Some thought that his zeal was partly influenced by a love of popularity; but I do not believe it. I think it was enthusiasm on behalf of "rights" and hatred of "wrongs," (real or supposed), and zeal for the abstract perfection of a darling theory. The first is always natural and amiable in youth, and the second surely pardonable in a young philosopher, since we usually find it equally obstinate in an old one.

It may be thought a bad omen for the fairness of any such discussion, that while the "Lock-outs," were very abundantly represented, the "Turn-outs" had neither puddler, nor joiner, nor mason, nor tailor, "on strike," to represent them. And yet they were well protected too; not only by the general antipathy to "lock-outs" entertained by the entire company, but by the volunteer championship of the young gentleman last mentioned, who though not liking strikes in the abstract, nor thinking them in general conducive to their professed end, yet distinctly avowed the absolute "right" of men to indulge in this expensive luxury, and the inexpediency, if not impossibility, of

any legislation in relation to them. But he also affirmed, as I have just said, that though the right of men collectively "to strike," if they pleased, must be conceded, it was only on the principle that it was also the right of men, if they thought proper, collectively to "ruin themselves."

The company agreed with him as to the almost insuperable difficulty of legislation ; but most of them thought that it was worth while to try anything and everything, except the utterly retrograde policy of re-enacting the laws against "Trade-combinations" in general. Some were in favour of Mr. Ludlow's plan of giving such combinations, both of masters and men, a legal *status* and corporate existence, and so making them amenable to the Law ; all were in favour of trying Courts of Conciliation or Arbitration, and hoped something from the extension of "co-operative principles ;" but they seemed to have most faith in the formation and expression of a much more decided public sentiment in relation to the social wrong both of lock-outs and strikes, except in the rare case where the one is an absolute necessity of self-defence, previously provoked by the other. They seemed to think that the tone of the press, and of society generally, was much too gentle and tolerant, considering the enormity of the evil ;—which, they complained, was too often spoken of as the result of conduct, unwise indeed, but not deserving any very

grave censure. Yet, if strikes and lock-outs be in themselves justifiable, every one felt, as the discussion proceeded, that the position involved the strangest paradoxes. If justifiable *per se*,—still more if they may be resorted to with the frequency and levity of the present day; if, by the agency of combination, they may at any time convulse or paralyze a whole trade, and even indirectly involve many other trades in the consequences; then it would seem that *that* is justifiable which may produce many of the evils of civil war, and disorganise society without society's having any voice in the matter or any means of self-defence; *that* is justifiable which may reverse some of the most important principles of public policy,—especially on the subject of free trade,—and destroy the best part of each individual man's liberty.

The conversation began something in this way. One of the clergymen (the vicar of the neighbouring town) expressed his gratification at the termination of the great strike in the iron trade; "which," said he, "has, as usual, been attended with great loss to everybody, and benefit to nobody. But the lesson seems in vain. There are half-a-dozen strikes going on in different parts of the country at this moment; and I am just now plagued by one myself." He explained, by saying that the repair of his church was standing still, because the masons had struck. His clerical brother told him that they were in the same predica-

ment at the new chapel. The Episcopalian good-humouredly nodded, and said, with a smile, "Well, we can hardly be expected to sympathise with each other in *such* a case, so fully as in others. But it is not the masons only who are on strike ; the tailors are out too, as if we were to be deprived at once of houses to live in and clothes to wear, and reduced to naked savages at once. I went yesterday to my tailor to order a suit of clothes which I wanted immediately ; he told me, with a long face, that he feared he must disappoint me this time, for that all his men were out on strike, as well as those of every other tailor in the town."

He added, that what with the vexations he had suffered from the masons' strike, and much pondering on the great "Iron Strike and Lock-out," his brain had been so wrought upon, that he had had on the preceding night a curious dream. "I thought," said he, laughing, "that all the learned professions—doctors, parsons, lawyers, journalists, schoolmasters, and professors—had struck for higher fees and better pay, and, like my tailor, refused to do another stitch of work till their just demands were complied with. The journals, methought, all announced the strike simultaneously, and then vanished the next morning, leaving the world in utter darkness as to all that was going on in it,—the great 'professional strike' included. An old gentleman, a friend of mine, was

roaring in a fit of the gout, and in vain sent for his doctor, who coolly reported that he was out on strike, and that the 'Doctors' Union' would not allow him to come. Another, an old lady, was *in articulo mortis*, and her distressed heirs in vain implored a lawyer to come and make her will; he told them she might die *intestate*, for him. As for me, with an odd mixture of feelings,—of shame and remorse at the thought of abandoning my sacred duties, and of noble heroism, such as only the martyrs of a strike can comprehend,—I stuck faithfully to our 'Clerical Trade-Union;' sent bride and bridegroom unmarried from the altar, held out with still greater courage against baptizing a sick infant, and, to prevent the congregation from assembling to no purpose on the Sunday, ended by locking the church, and riding off with the key in my pocket; thus indulging in a strike and a lock-out at one and the same time. Upon my word," he concluded, "I almost think it would be well for the whole nation to strike together, by way of applying to the system the *reductio ad absurdum*. We should at all events get, what often seems the great object of strikes, (with such levity and wantonness are they resolved upon,) our fill of idleness for a few weeks."

We made ourselves merry by pursuing the odd dream a little, and fancying some of the incidents which diversify ordinary strikes. We imagined a "non-union" doctor hastening to a patient, but

hoaxed into going ten miles in another direction to a pretended case of far greater urgency ; or a "union" doctor, slyly stealing to his work, but waylaid and beaten by his indignant brethren, and dosed with his own physic ; the horrors of Paterfamilias on finding that all his ten children were to have an enforced holiday for the half-year, or if not, that himself must be their sole tutor ; or a clergyman of the "clerical union" betrayed into the weakness of marrying a fond couple, and then tossed in a blanket, in gown and cassock, by his irritated brethren ; or a lawyer drawing a will for a client *in extremis*, and then beaten almost into the same condition for thus setting the "rules" of the "Lawyers' Trade-union" at defiance.

"Well," said his clerical brother, "and if such a dream as yours, or something like it, could come true, would not the principles on which strikes are generally justified, justify these classes? *i.e.*, on the supposition that they were conscientiously convinced (as ordinary 'turnouts' are supposed to be) that their just claims are withheld by their niggardly paymasters, the public? I am quite confident," he continued, with a smile, "that there are thousands of poor preachers, as well as doctors, lawyers, and literary men, who are living on less pay than many skilled artisans ; nay, to whom some puddlers' wages would be a fortune. I am certain also that we are the classes for whom the recent beneficial *fiscal* reforms have done the least.

The general effect of recent legislation has been,—and sincerely do I thank God for it,—to relieve us all of the taxes which press on articles of prime necessity, or greatly to reduce them ; but the working classes are also entirely relieved from the *income tax*, which has so long pressed heavily on many of us. I do not envy them this exemption for a moment : God forbid ! but such is the fact.—And then the benefit of a reduced or abolished tax, I grant, has not been lost, even where the *consumer* has not gained ; but it has not come to *us* in proportion. It has gone to the manufacturer, merchant, trader, and artisan. Now as the articles thus relieved from taxation have been very various, large classes of the commercial world (one after another) have had, in addition to the reduced price of many articles in which they do not deal, (by which of course *we* too benefit), a separate *bonne bouche*, to sweeten the nauseous taste of the Income Tax. Thus the repeal of the paper duty was a great boon to newspaper proprietors, to booksellers, and to merchants who use large quantities of coarse paper. One of the last assures me that it saved his firm two hundred or more a year, and that he was much obliged to the Government for having thus paid him back, in one lump, more than his Income Tax ! But my penny paper is still a penny paper to me ; I do not see that the new books I buy are any cheaper ; and as to stationery, why, if there be a difference, it is so

slight," said he, laughing, "that I do not suppose that, on all the sermons I have written since the paper duty was abolished, I have saved three halfpence. Even if I were as voluminous as Richard Baxter, and scribbled a folio every year, I should hardly be richer by a sixpence."

"But at all events," said Mr. Charles D——, the son of our host, "you partake in that *general* prosperity of the nation which flows from just principles of commercial freedom."

"Of course," was the reply; "though not, I think, in the same proportion with those who are engaged in commerce. But do not imagine I am grumbling. I am only mentioning it to show that, if any classes could be justified in a strike, I think it is the professional class. And what I ask, is just this:—If any of us, or all of us, were to combine on some fine morning, strike for higher wages through the country, and suspend all our functions till we got them, would it be merely the assertion of a *right*, which, because legislation cannot deal with it, is on that account innocent? Or, granting that legislation cannot deal with it, because impossible or inexpedient, would it be still a *crime* against society?"

"Perhaps," said the young man, laughing, "we might be able to bear with equanimity the 'parsons' strike,' and allow them to indulge in a lock-out into the bargain."

“Ah! Mr. Charles,” said the other, good-humouredly, but with gravity, “that might do, if men found it as easy to die without religion as to live without it. But I have exercised my function too long not to know that the feelings with which they regard it in the fulness of bread and in the flush of health and youth, are apt to alter very much when poverty or sickness, and, above all, death, knocks at their door. And I fancy you would not deny, that if all who teach the ignorant the truths and duties of morality and religion were ‘to cease out of the land,’ your servants would hardly be quite so honest or your merchandise so safe as they are now. The Canaanite—including all the varieties of Hittite, Hivite, Jebusite, Perizzite, and Gergashite—would soon increase upon you.”

“I acknowledge it, sir,” said the other, promptly; “believe me, it was but a joke, and perhaps not a very courteous one.”

“That,” said the vicar, “is frankly and handsomely said. And now let me remind you,” he continued, smiling, “there are functions of ours which even youth thinks by no means tedious: and their cessation would be felt as a sore grievance. It would not be pleasant to bring your bride to the altar, and lead her away unmarried. And so we return to the question: on the grounds on which you justify the artisans’ strikes, would you think such a general strike of the learned professions justifiable, though it produced

through the country something much worse than old Pope Innocent's interdict in King John's reign ; that is to say, if none were baptized, buried, or married, if no doctor would physic his patients, or lawyer advise his clients?"

Our young friend whispered to his right-hand neighbour something which made him laugh. "Come, Charles," said his father, "no *asides*—what were you saying to Mr. N——?"

"I was only saying, sir, that half the nation would be still better pleased with the strike, if the lawyer and doctor turned out with the parson."

"Take care," said the doctor, laughing, "I may make you recant, when you next send for me."

"And I," said the lawyer, "will torment you, Mr. Charles, by three weeks' needless delay at least in drawing out your marriage settlements."

"Ay, ay," said the vicar, "make him pay well for his jest, as you easily can. Law and physic may fight for the best claim to the motto—*nemo me impune lacessit*. But, seriously, these strikes are no jest. If God does not send us trouble, it seems we make it for ourselves. He smote one of our great sources of commercial prosperity—the cotton trade—with the canker, and now we must needs do what we can to destroy another—the iron trade—with our own hand. They talk about the political right to indulge in strikes and lock-outs ; perhaps it is impossible to deny it, but

recollecting all the mischief and misery that have flowed from them, and their tendency to produce still greater, I think that to originate or abet them is a heavy crime against society."

"Nay, my good sir," said Mr. Charles, "you are hardly just: crime, it surely cannot be; for those who strike only exercise a right which each of us claims, 'to do what we will with our own:' and they exercise that right *together*,—that is all. Recollect, before you call it a 'crime,' that the legislature allows the legitimacy of combinations on the part of the workmen (and consequently on that of the masters also), by having repealed all penalties against them. You surely do not wish to restore those foolish laws?"

"Not I," said the other; "trade-combinations have, no doubt, their legitimate uses, though I do not reckon strikes among them: but we will not quarrel about a word. 'Crime,' in the political sense, these strikes may not be,—as many other things are not, which are very properly called grievous offences against society notwithstanding. We shall both admit, I suppose, that there are many offences, of which law can and does take no notice, but which are the fruitful sources of the crimes of which it *does* take notice,—as, for example, private intoxication, a licentious life, ingratitude, filial disobedience: all which Society, for the most part, can only repress by that frown of abhorrence and contempt, that consignment to a Pariah

caste, which the generality of men, not utterly abandoned, feel far more deeply than any moderate legal penalty. It is ever a tendency of a too lenient public morality, to take its measure of what is right or wrong, innocent or criminal, from what the law can reach, or fails to reach ; from what can be made the matter of positive statute and definite punishment, or otherwise. This is that subordination of the ‘spirit’ to the ‘letter,’ which, though but an unavoidable result of the infirmity of all civil law, and the necessary consequence of its restricted object, is apt to operate unfavourably on our moral conceptions. If it does not impair our *theory* of ethics, it makes us view with too much lenience many actions of the most pernicious character, merely because the law cannot touch them. Such errors it is the part of an enlightened *public sentiment* to correct.”

“I cannot admit that strikes are to be accounted crimes even in that secondary sense you have just expounded,” said our young friend. “That they are in every case great folly, I fully admit : and it may be shown in a minute, for the argument lies in a nut-shell. The principal element,” said he, clearing his voice a little, and settling himself, as it were, to deliver a little economic demonstration—“the principal element that must determine the relations of capital and labour is the law of demand and supply. If there are fifty workmen, and you want a hundred, they will make

you pay high wages for them. If there are a hundred workmen, and you only want fifty, they will by competition bring down wages to the lowest level on which it is possible to subsist. Now, to strike in such a crisis is to refuse the little that can be got, and to resolve that ‘half a loaf is *not* better than no bread.’ This was the case in many of the earlier strikes, when England was suffering, some forty years ago, from a *plethora* of labour, and political economists were full of alarm as to what was to be done in a few years, when the labour-market should become still more crowded ;—so little was human wisdom able to foresee the march of events, and to anticipate that in a generation or so the nation would be likely to suffer from a lack of men rather than from their superabundance, and that wages would consequently be *high* ; high, on the opposite principle to that just mentioned,—that if you want a hundred workmen, and there are only fifty, they will make you pay in proportion.”

“But,” said his father, “strikes have *not* become less frequent in this condition of things ; rather they have become more frequent and prolonged.”

“Just so, sir,” said his son, “for the ‘Unions’ have better funds to maintain them ; but their folly is just as easily shown—nay, it is greater ; for you may make some allowance for the blindness of a starving artisan, when you can make none for a man who kicks down his full pail. But the *folly* is still clear. The limits

within which the capitalist and the labourer co-operate are simply these :—the workman must at least have wages sufficient for his subsistence, the capitalist sufficient profit to induce him to invest his capital in employing him ; what lies *between*, when these ends are attained, is the prize : and the question is, in what proportions it shall be divided? Now it is a larger slice of this prize that the strike, when wages are good, is designed to secure. But the folly, I affirm, is still equally manifest ; for the moment the strike begins, and so long as it continues, the *prize itself* vanishes, and both parties are left with—*nothing!* In the one case, it is as if a child would not eat his cake, because it was not as much as would satisfy his appetite ; in the other, because, though it was enough, his brother had a cake twice as big.”

“Or,” said his father, “as if Joseph’s brethren sullenly put their plates away, because Benjamin’s mess was five times as large ! Well, Charles, you may call it folly, as undoubtedly it is ; but if committed with eyes open—as I believe it often to be—by the men who start and carry out these strikes, and who often live a very merry life at the expense of their more ignorant victims, I call it a crime against society and not simply folly. But then, what do you say to the consequences of these strikes,—the destitution which often follows them, the starving women and children, the increased burdens on the parish and the poor’s

rates,—the collateral injuries inflicted on connected branches of trade,—do not these things constitute strikes a crime against society ?”

“ If the folly of the thing be fully seen, and the consequences to which you advert fully seen too, I can hardly deny that they are.”

Here Mr. W——, already referred to as one of the chief spokesmen, a sort of Nestor of the Spindles,—who had seen many a long strike during the last forty years, and had gathered much and sorrowful wisdom from his experience,—insinuated himself into the conversation ; I say insinuated, for he spoke in a low, gentle, persuasive voice, and with great deliberation.

“ Your little speech, Mr. Charles, about the *folly* of strikes and lock-outs is all very well ; and, certainly, next to war, they are the most uncouth and barbarous ways of settling differences that men ever contrived ; nay, a strike or a lock-out *is* war : or rather it is still more senseless : for in war one side at all events wins, whereas here, in nine cases out of ten, both sides must be losers. But now, quite approving of your little speech,—which I hope you will one day enlarge at the hustings,—you have not answered the question of our clerical friends ; namely, whether, if such a thing *could* be, as that all the professional folks of a whole district, or, for the matter of that, of the whole kingdom, were suddenly to turn out on a strike for higher fees or salaries, you would say it was a *justifiable* step ? For

my part, I am inclined to think that a strike, or lock-out, is not only a blunder, but a crime."

"Why, Mr. W——," said the young man, "I reckoned confidently on your taking the other side. I have heard you often say that the evil must be left to the correction of the evil produced by it."

"So perhaps I think still ; but among the correctives I have often thought that the moral reprobation of society ought to be added, and that it would be well if these things were always thought of and spoken of as crimes as well as blunders."

"But did I not hear you the other day defend the masters in the great lock-out in the iron-trade?"

"You did, and I am still of the same opinion. When the organization of men against masters became general, an equally extensive organization of masters against men became necessary : and if the strife must go on, I think so gigantic an exhibition of the evil would in the end be the truest mercy to all parties. For my part, I would rather see the battle in one or other of our great trades fought out to the last, and the whole nation thus roused to a sense of the enormity of the evil, than see the perpetual disturbance of one branch of trade after another, and often of several at the same time, and no end of misery produced in all parts of the kingdom ;—just as in war, I would sooner have things brought to issue in one great pitched battle, than see guerillas doing fifty times the mischief

in detail. But apart from such reasons as these, you never yet heard me, and never will hear me, say one word of good of either strikes or lock-outs. There are only two cases (and they are very rare) in which they can be justified, and then they are a pure necessity. First, when, either from the competition in the labour-market, or scanty capital, or the scantier *humanity* of those who possess it, wages are offered on which the workman cannot subsist ; then, of course, he must and ought to strike, if it be only to change his employer or his occupation, or to emigrate ; for one of these he *must* do :—and secondly, when the scanty supply of labour in the labour-market leads the labourer to insist on terms which, in fact, would make the trade not worth carrying on,—in which case the master must have a lock-out to some purpose, and will be very sorry for it ; as it is then necessary to ‘shut up’ his factory as well as ‘lock out’ his men ! But between these limits there never *ought* to be a strike or a lock-out. Words cannot express, as you say, the *folly* of them,—for though either party may, in a particular case and for a little while, be successful, such success never can pay for the loss inflicted on *both* parties by the total suspension of trade during the strike. It is not too much to say that such folly is like that of the man who killed the goose that laid the golden eggs—or like that of the harlot in Solomon’s judgment, who said of the child, ‘Let it be neither mine nor thine,’—

or like that of the dog that let go the substance and caught at the shadow—or like anything else that is most foolish. In every case, masters and men, as rational creatures, *ought*, by conference and arbitration, to be able to adjust these quarrels without first destroying (as they do now) the very thing they are quarrelling about ; that they do not, is a great blot on our civilization : and considering the immense mischiefs, not only to themselves, but to others, which spring from their present goings on, these things are not a folly merely, but a grievous wrong to society. But, in order that we may see whether we ought so to call it, I should like to know once more what you would think of a doctors', or lawyers', or parsons' strike, any or all of them ?”

“ But the very idea is absurd, my dear sir.”

“ Of course it is ; but still it will serve as an illustration ; and the absurder the better, for that purpose, for you acknowledge that a strike is the extreme of folly.”

“ Well, such a strike would at all events be more deliberately cruel, and on that account, as well as because the men might be supposed to know better, would make society more *angry*.”

“ I quite agree with you there,” said Mr. W—— ; “ but I think you would hardly say that *that* nullifies the principle you have laid down ; namely, that everybody is at liberty to set the value he pleases on his

skill and services, and that, by parity of reason, any number of men may agree to do so. And as to the inhumanity, or inconvenience to society, it is but a question of degree after all. I am sure you will allow that the sum total of the miseries which many a long strike has occasioned to tens of thousands of starving men, women, and children,—the sufferings involved in the ruin of many prosperous manufacturers and merchants,—in the disorganization of trade, even in some cases its transfer to other lands,—and the loss of all that is implied in the loss of millions of wages, (to say nothing of the demoralizing effects,) will hardly admit of computation ; and if the suffering produced in this case does not affect the *principle*, neither will it in the imagined cases.—But what other objection can you find to this peculiar strike or lock-out that would not apply to the ordinary ones ?”

“ Well,” said Mr. Charles, “ I should say they would involve a breach of contract with society. You know the workman must complete his contract before he ‘ strikes,’ and so must these.”

“ Let us then,” said the other, “ suppose, the doctor to have finished with his patients in hand, and the lawyer with the causes he has begun, and the curate with his year of service, and so on, and afterwards to begin their strike,—what objection then ?”

“ But, from their position, the reasonable expectations of society, and the nature of the functions they

have to perform, may they not be considered under an *implied* permanent contract to society?"

"I certainly think they may," answered Mr. W——; "but in no other sense than are our labourers and capitalists. I deny that any body of men have a right, if they please, to fold their arms, or refuse to employ their time, skill, and strength for the benefit of the community, unless the terms they may dictate, however extravagant, are complied with. All of us owe duties to the society of which we are members, and from which we expect protection; and the collective muscle, sinew, skill, and brains, of the men who have, it may be, nothing else to employ for the public wealth are no more simply theirs, to use or not to use, than the coal and iron of the landed proprietor. If these be capriciously wasted or foolishly left idle, (as you admit is the case in strikes), the whole community, and not the men or their masters only, suffer severely,—as the history of strikes demonstrates but too plainly. The waste, again, of the 'Union' funds, collected for more legitimate purposes,—the waste of the public money, to support those who might have supported themselves,—the waste of private charity, and the increase of idleness,—are chargeable upon these strikes; and I once more say, make them not only a blunder, but a crime."

"You spoke just now," said Mr. Charles, "of the proprietor of coal and iron. Cannot *he* do what he

will with his own? to let it lie idle, or to waste it, if he pleases?"

"I think not," said Mr. W——, decisively, "without a *crime*, whether the law regards it as such or not; though I apprehend it soon would do so in an extreme case. The natural riches of a country are intended for the benefit of the nation that occupies it; and the law of property, in securing to some a special right over them, does not design that the nation shall be robbed of all beneficial interest in them. 'Property,' as Burke justly says, 'has its duties as well as its rights, and the one are correlative to the other;' and as he truly adds, if those duties be wholly neglected, 'it will not be property long.' Take an extreme case. Suppose all the coal and iron throughout the kingdom were the property of ten persons. Do you think the nation would endure to be told that, because it was their *property*, they might play the part of the dog in the manger with it, and either seclude it from use, or (if that were possible) destroy it? would not the nation rather resume its rights over what is essentially national wealth, and therefore to be used for the benefit of the whole community?"

"I certainly think it would in so extreme a case. But I do not see how it could similarly deal with refractory workmen who should choose to withhold or waste what you truly call *their* part of the 'national wealth.'"

“Neither do I, nor am I now speaking of *that*; but merely showing that the nation would in the one case regard the imputed conduct as a crime against society; and by parity of reason may do so in the other.—But what other objection have you to apply to the ‘professional’ strike which does not apply to the rest?”

“Well, if one must reason on so absurd an hypothesis, I should say that it would bring upon us all the evils of a system of monopoly and protection, which the nation has abjured.”

“Very well,” replied his acute opponent; “but is not that just what a strike tends to? Is it not an attempt to affix, by combination, an artificial price upon a certain commodity, and so to bring upon us all the evils of monopoly and protection, though abjured and abandoned by the state? The labourers do this by agreeing collectively that they will not sell their labour under a given price; not the price which is determined by the competition of the open market, but by a combination which artificially creates a *monopoly* of the commodity, and vends it on the principles of *protection*. Nor does it matter at all whether the commodity be skill and labour, or any other,—say, for example, iron or coal. If all the coal and iron masters were to agree that they would not sell either of these commodities under 20*l.* per ton, would it not be just the same thing in effect, as the

legislature's fixing an artificial value on corn, and decreeing that it should not be sold under that price?"

"Well, and do not the iron-masters of a whole district meet from time to time to agree on the price at which they will sell that commodity, and bind themselves to adhere to it,—though I admit they find it hard enough to carry out their object?"

"Do you condemn, or approve that practice?" said Mr. W——.

"Well, I think it the assertion of a *right*, on the grounds already applied to strikes."

"You are consistent, at all events; *I* believe they are to be condemned on those very grounds; *I* believe that all such attempts are of the nature of strikes and lock-outs, and are unjustifiable for precisely similar reasons. Further, I believe that they are tolerated, solely because, first, as you say, the attempt can only be partially successful; and secondly because the sellers rarely venture to deviate much from the price which unrestricted competition would lead to. But if, by a stringent combination, they agreed to accept nothing under 20*l.* a ton for their commodity, I scarcely think you would consider such an artificial price a *justifiable* use of their rights of property."

"But the very supposition," said Mr. Charles, "is an absurdity. On the principles of human nature to which a sound political economy appeals, we know

that they *would* not act thus, still less throw away their commodities for nothing."

"Quite true; but it is still an *imaginable* case, and I want to know how you think society would characterise such conduct, and how, if persisted in, society would *act*?"

"Well, of course, if such things were done at all, society would naturally attribute it to madness, and shutting up the so-called proprietors, give their possessions to the next heirs,—who would know what to do with them. If such conduct *could* be supposed to flow from sane persons, it would certainly, as you say, be regarded as a crime against society, and justly incur the transfer or forfeiture of the national wealth thus rendered useless or destroyed."

"Very well," said Mr. W——, "that admission is sufficient for the application of my argument."

"Excuse me," rejoined his antagonist; "it seems to me, on the contrary, that its being a purely imaginary case altogether vitiates the argument. It seems to me, that we may fearlessly depend on the principles of an enlightened political economy in all such matters, and cling to the *laissez-faire* principle. You know the old laws against speculation in corn, and the indignation expressed against those who stored it up, waited for advancing prices, and sold it (as was complained) in times of scarcity at famine prices. They are now universally admitted to have been great Public Bene-

factors, who, thus storing the commodity, and selling it at a price in proportion to its scarcity, prevented it from being wasted, taught the community thrift in the use of it, and made it thereby last as long and go as far as possible. You surely would not have any laws made to regulate such matters, even in times of the greatest pressure ; but would trust to the infallible principles of human nature to regulate them."

"Most assuredly," said Mr. W——. "So far from wishing any laws on the subject, the miser mentioned in some old author, (you know his name, I dare say, —the fact is mentioned in M'Culloch's 'Political Economy,') who, in a siege, sold a rat for 200 shillings, should go untouched for me."

"The story is told in Pliny," said Mr. Charles ; "and pray recollect what M'Culloch adds from Valerius Maximus—for it makes for me, and shows that things naturally adjust themselves very well—'that the avaricious seller had the worst of the bargain, for he died of hunger, while the purchaser was saved by his rat !'"

"Well, Mr. Charles, so far from denying a syllable of what you have just said about corn-speculators and the like, I have devoutly believed it all, a score of years before you were born. I heartily agree that the class of which you speak, once so ignorantly libelled, confer immense benefits on society ; and I only hesitate to call them in the *fullest* sense of the word

Benefactors, because we generally associate *designed* benevolence with the term ; in that sense, they are no more benefactors in preserving your corn for you, than the weazel who kills the rats that would eat it ; for he does it for his *own* pleasure, and not for your profit. However, for the purposes of my argument, your illustration, properly applied, will answer just as well as mine. I fully grant that the corn-speculator, like the owner of coal or iron, may be trusted, on the principles of human nature and political economy, not to destroy their commodities, nor to refuse the highest price they can get for them. Still, as before, it is an imaginable case, and that will do for me. Let us suppose, then,—to take your illustration of the corn-speculator, but making the case *really* parallel to that of the imagined iron-masters,—that he either set his granaries on fire in a time of scarcity, or refused to sell corn except at such prices as it was impossible to pay, and so multitudes starved with food before their eyes :—a purely imaginary case, I admit, but still imaginable. Now what would society in such a case call such conduct, and how would it act ? Would it not take one or other of the two alternatives you have mentioned,—lock the man up as mad, or treat him as a criminal, and confiscate his corn to public use ?”

“I admit it ; but still it is an imaginary case,” replied the other.

“Very good ; but if it occurred, you would call it

by strong names. Now this, which, I grant, is but an imaginary folly in the possessors of coal-mines or the speculators in corn, is really chargeable on that portentous madness or social crime called a strike. The commodity, while the strike lasts, is simply wasted and destroyed ; and even if, after the strike, it sells at a little advance, it is as if the corn-factor destroyed part of his corn in hope of getting a better price for the rest ! Granting that a strike is occasionally successful, (as no doubt it is), it is not perhaps once in twenty times that the gain makes up for the loss entailed in getting it ; and for the inevitable loss, *not* in money, but in things far more precious, no money can ever pay at all. And even as regards money, comparing what has been lost by strikes with what has been gained, the loss probably exceeds the gain in a ratio that can hardly be computed. The late strike in North Staffordshire alone is computed to have cost the iron-workers at least 100,000*l*."

"Very true," replied Mr. Charles ; "and even when there is a gain from a strike, I grant it would generally come without the loss entailed by one : for if, as I have said, the labour-market is scantily supplied,—if employers want fifty men and can only get ten,—these last are pretty sure of being able to make their own terms."

"To resume our argument, then," said Mr. W—— ; "since the implied breach of contract with society, and

the charge of reintroducing monopoly and protection, certainly no more apply to a 'professional' strike than to any other, what other objection have you?"

"I fancy it might be said that if such a thing were possible at all, it could only be effected by some unimaginable *moral compulsion* exerted on the members of such a combination, and attended with the destruction of individual liberty."

"The very thing," said the other, "which may be most reasonably objected to ordinary strikes. It is for that reason I argue that strikes are a grave social offence, inasmuch as they inevitably involve a violation of the principles of individual liberty. If there be one thing that Liberty should insure, it should be the power of every one to use his skill, time, toil, and brains to the best advantage; to sell his commodities (these among the rest) at the best price he can obtain for them; that he should be perfectly untrammelled in making his bargain, instead of being, as he so often is now, the victim of an insolent Combination which tells him, if he belongs to it, that he must not work at all, except upon the terms it dictates; and if he does *not* belong to it, too often procures his dismissal from employment, simply because he does not. It is one of the most crying evils of strikes, that they often introduce a social tyranny as grinding as that of the worst political despotism."

"I can quite go with you," said the other, "in ad-

mitting the gross social tyranny which strikes too generally engender, and the miseries they bring ; but still I do not see how legislation, so long as a combination of workmen is purely voluntary, and no overt acts of violence are committed, can possibly deal with them. As soon as any such acts are committed, the law, you know, steps in and asserts, and properly asserts, its rights,—for as Mr. Mill says in his ‘*Political Economy*,’ ‘No severity, necessary to the purpose, is too great to be employed against attempts to compel workmen to join a Union, or take part in a strike, by threats or violence.’ But these acts, though numerous enough in the early history of strikes, are now, as you are aware, comparatively rare ; the old tricks of incendiarism or of machine-breaking, as directed against obnoxious masters, and of personal violence as directed against obnoxious workmen, have been pretty well discontinued since the memorable trials between 1838 and 1843. The organisers of strikes have been at least more prudent and cautious, if not more enlightened, than to throw vitriol, or use the like gentle methods of persuasion, on a refractory fellow-workman.”*

“There may be some improvement, doubtless,” said Mr. W—— ; “but similar acts have by no means

* The recent disclosures before the Sheffield Commission show how very precarious any such inference was, and the pertinence of the reply of the other interlocutor in the Dialogue. See Appendix (B).

ceased ; even during the last year,* most serious outrages by brickmakers and others were committed, which their perpetrators are now expiating in penal settlements. Nay, we had a riot at Dewsbury only the other day. Nor have I the smallest hope, while strikes are in fashion, that it will not be one of their incidental, but still certain, evils, to lead to such deplorable violence. When men's passions are excited, when party-feeling runs high, when anger, malice, and revenge are uppermost, and there is nothing but ignorance to control them, such excesses are to be periodically looked for, and will cease only when strikes themselves shall cease."

"Still," said Mr. Charles, "when they *do* take place, the law steps in and avenges them. I do not see what more it can do, so long as the combinations in question are purely voluntary, and the intimidation—persecution, if you choose to call it so—of individuals, and the consequent repression of individual liberty, (however annoying or pernicious), are the result only of moral influence. I do not see that the evil admits of any legislative remedy. As to *that*, all you have said seems to me very little to the purpose."

"What I have said," replied Mr. W——, coolly, "has been indeed to very little purpose, if it has not shown you that I am not inquiring whether the evils in question admit of any adequate legislative remedy ; perhaps on that point I am as doubtful as you are ;

but whether a 'strike' be the grave social evil which I think it is; whether, if it be so, we do wisely, merely because it may be one with which legislation cannot efficiently grapple, in speaking of it, (as is too often the case), as if it were a justifiable thing in itself,—an unwise expedient indeed, but still an innocent one; whether, on the contrary, we shall not do well, if it be a flagrant wrong,—nothing less than a social *crime*,—in calling it so, and thus endeavouring to bring public opinion to bear upon it. If this can be done, if the nation generally can be got to speak of an organiser or abettor of strikes in the same terms as they would of a mad dog, or any other social plague, it will not a little tend to abate the mischief. It is not the masters only, or society in general, that are to be pitied as the victims, in manifold ways, of this social tyranny. Thousands and tens of thousands of those who 'strike' are themselves yet more to be pitied. You have only to go amongst them and talk with them, to learn how many there are, who in almost every strike bitterly complain of their fellow-workmen, as compelling them under the pressure of this moral persecution, to join in acts which they feel in fact must involve them in present want, and often irretrievable ruin. In numberless instances have I heard one and another of these poor creatures say:—'I am very sorry; for my part, I was contented with my employers, and my wages; but the bulk of my fellow-

workmen resolved to strike, and what could *I* do? I should have been persecuted in a thousand petty ways, or cut off from all share in the funds of the Union,' (collected, by the way, for very different purposes), 'and so what could I do but strike with the rest?'"

"Very true," said Mr. Charles; "the condition of thousands of them is most pitiable; but still, how can you help them? It is the ascendancy of numbers and headstrong passions over a minority with feeble wills; but it is a *voluntary* subserviency on the part of the latter, and I do not see how the thing can be remedied."

"Neither, perhaps, do I, by *legislation* alone: though, by the way, even the Law does not absolutely regard this species of tyranny as beyond its cognizance, when it *can* take hold of it. The spiritual influence which an artful priest sometimes exercises over a weak woman, and which the law, when it can, severely punishes, is precisely of the same nature; neither worse nor better, than that which a tyrannical majority in a thousand cases of 'strike' exercises over a timid minority, who are dragged into months of misery and starvation, because they have not the courage to resist. 'It is truly wonderful,' says one of the best writers on this subject, 'to reflect that scarcely any existing government in Europe, from Constantinople to Petersburg or Paris, would venture to exercise so stringent a rule over its subjects as a

large proportion of our working men submit to from other men of their own order.' But it does not make the tyranny less hateful, nor to exercise it the less criminal, that it is of a *moral* character. I may mention an example, that recently came under my knowledge, of the comprehensive nature of this social tyranny. I had a friend residing in the south of England, who successfully competed for the erection of a certain public building in a northern county. He made contracts with the brickmakers in the neighbourhood of the site, to supply him with bricks. Having in his own employ a gang of men whom he could thoroughly depend upon, and having undertaken to complete his contract in a given time, he thought it would be worth his while to bring them from the south, and did so. He immediately received intimation from the 'Trade Union,' that if he did not dismiss all these workmen, he should not have a single brick! He said he should bring that to the test, and immediately applied to his brickmakers to supply the bricks. But he soon found that the Israelites could as soon complete their tale of bricks without straw, as these men could complete *their* tale of bricks without the consent of their 'Jack Straw,'—the Brickmakers' Union. They told him it was out of their power to fulfil their contracts; they dared not send him a single brick in the face of that pressure which their own men threatened them with. It was

in vain he urged that they had entered into contracts with him, and were liable to penalties for breach of them. They told him they were very sorry ; none could be more strongly convinced of the iniquitous tyranny of the ' Trades' Union ' than they were ; but it was out of their power to supply him, without incurring heavier penalties than that of throwing up their contracts with him, and paying the forfeiture ! Now I should like to know, whether you can imagine a more complete destruction of the reality, nay, of even the semblance of liberty, than in this case ? The builder could not employ his own known and tried workmen, the men could not work for their own master, the brickmakers could not fulfil their contracts, but had to pay the penalty for breach of them ! No one was permitted in the whole transaction to dispose of his own brains, time, capital, labour in the way he judged for his interests, and as individual freedom dictated ; and all because the brickmakers determined, in their sovereign will, that if any one of these persons acted as a freeman might and ought, they would indulge in the luxury of revenge in the shape of a strike ! Is it possible to imagine any exercise of tyranny more gross or monstrous than this ? or any bondage more humiliating or more absolute than that of its victims ? Is it not just as tyrannical as if, when the projectors of the said public building had declared that any builder in the country might compete, the

architects, contractors, and master builders of the neighbourhood, had combined in a 'professional' strike, to defeat them?"

"I have nothing to say for it," said his opponent. "It is not possible, I admit, to imagine a greater social wrong than you have described. But what is the remedy?"

"Perhaps I don't know," said the other; "only, as before, do not let us refrain from calling things by their right name; nor pretend that such vile conspiracies against freedom as these are the legitimate assertion of rights; or anything else—whether the law can reach them or not—than flagrant wrongs to society. Nor ought we as a nation to boast of our freedom while such social tyranny prevails. If these combinations be indeed an example of the fruit of liberty, that fruit has already become rotten. Have you read the remarkable pamphlet on this subject by that able architect Mr. Waterhouse, whose beautiful 'Hall of Justice' in Manchester is one of the noblest architectural triumphs of our day?"

"Yes. I see that his men struck, thereby delayed the work for some time, and entailed much loss on all parties, because he refused to dismiss a solitary gang-leader, over whom he had no control. I believe the senseless men have got rid of Mr. Waterhouse instead of the gang-leader! No doubt, the workmen of other localities will get the benefit."

"But such things are the necessary consequence of the *right* to form these combinations?"

"I cannot deny that," said our young philosopher; "though I have not a word to say for such suicidal selfishness."

"Meantime," resumed Mr. W——, "you have not mentioned any objection to strikes of the 'professional' class, or indeed any other, which does not equally apply to ordinary strikes. Now since the former, if they could exist at all, and were as widely ramified as our ordinary strikes and lock-outs have recently threatened to be, would certainly issue in the utter disorganization and ruin of society, and would be denounced on that ground alone, not simply as monstrous blunders, but as enormous wrongs, I cannot see why you should not apply the term to the latter."

To this Mr. Charles did not reply, and I thought by his silence seemed to concede the conclusion which it appeared to me Mr. W—— had so triumphantly made out. After a pause the latter added:

"And your remedy for all these evils, whether of the real or supposed 'strikes' is, of course, the same in all cases?"

"Certainly; *laissez faire*. Nor have I anything else to say even in the extremest cases. Should your imaginary strike ever take place," he continued, laughing; "and be as obstinate as some we have known,

you must import your surgeons, doctors, and clergymen from abroad, or you must migrate to find them."

"As to the doctors," said the other, "their patients would be dead before the foreign physician could come; as to the clergymen, we must be content with a few missionaries; as to the lawyers, perhaps the law-suits would often be as soon finished if the suitors waited for foreign help."

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Charles, "it is seriously the only remedy that I see, in the last resort, for either your imaginary or the real cases. In these last, the labour or the commodities (if strikes or lock-outs were obstinate) may and will ultimately be got from abroad, or the trade and its capital will migrate thither; and so the foolish people will at last burn their fingers."

"Very likely; but what consolation will that be, when the nation is ruined? As to the first and more tolerable alternative,—suppose all you want can be imported, the remedy cannot be applied at once, and immense loss and suffering will be entailed in the interval; secondly, the commodity must be at an increased cost to the community, and all incurred in the interest of principles virtually the same with those of protection; thirdly, the disorganization of trade which attends such a course—even if happily no violence or outrage accompany it—must involve thousands in ruin; fourthly, if, by the introduction of

labour, or any commodity whatsoever from abroad, as a *consequence* of such strikes, many are permanently thrown out of employment and come on the poor rates—a case continually happening in ordinary cases of a prolonged strike—a grievous wrong is done to society. And then, look at your *second* remedy,—if indeed it be not rather utter ruin ;—namely, that, as the ultimate consequence of triumphant strikes and lock-outs, trade, and the capital which supports it, would flow away from a nation, and migrate to a soil where they would not be thus persecuted. Would the state of things which required *such* a remedy, involve no wrong to society on the part of those who had brought it about? rather, would not a course of action which had that result, be a crime against society of the most heinous character? But, further, it does not follow that you will be able to apply even any such ruinous remedy as this ; for if our ‘Trade Unions’ are able to carry out the boastful threats they have often uttered, and to organise their conspiracy against capital as effectually abroad as they have often done at home ; if they can ‘belt the world round,’ as some of them say, in one chain of impregnable Trade Unions ; and if the lock-outs be co-extensive in *their* combinations—the evil will be wide as the world, and you could no more migrate from it than you can escape from your own shadow. *That*, I grant, is scarcely to be apprehended ; but it is the tendency

of such combinations ; and shall we hesitate to call them wrongs, as well as blunders ?”

“I am under no apprehension,” said one of the other guests, “on that score ; if it must come to a general struggle between lock-outs and strikes, the masters are sure to beat the workmen ; and though I hate a lock-out as heartily as I do a strike, except as an absolute necessity of self-defence, I have no doubt in the world, that if the workmen are resolved to bring it to such issue, that we shall beat them.”

“Perhaps so,” said our host. “But for the reasons which have been assigned, it is a victory which would be only one degree better than defeat. The masters do not combine so readily or so firmly as the men ; and by the time a contest between them has come to an end, the prize for which both parties contend may have vanished in the conflict ; important branches of our trade may be found hopelessly disorganized and crippled, or even transferred to other lands. Meantime every one seems in doubt whether legislation can do much ; and since these disputes between the men and their employers as to whether an equitable share of the conjoint products of capital and labour falls to each, are certain to continue, according to the ever-varying relations of capital and population, ought not all parties to do their very uttermost to try fairly the proposed ‘courts of arbitration,’ or ‘conciliation,’ as they call them in France ?”

“I shall be very glad, for one,” said the last speaker, “to see the experiment fairly tried, but it must not be such an arbitration as one of the workmen recently proposed—an ‘arbitration,’ the decree of which *must* be acceptable to the workmen. That would be like a ‘reciprocity treaty’ all the advantages of which should be on one side. It reminds one of the woman who, being exhorted to remember her promise to obey her husband, said ‘Obey him? I have no objection to obey him, but I won’t be ruled.’”

“Let the method be tried, at all events,” said our host, “and I hope something also may be done by the gradual and wise extension of the co-operative system.”

“At any rate,” said Mr. W——, “there is less reason for resorting to such ruinous measures as strikes, and more for trying sensible methods, in our day than at any former periods. Both parties can *afford* to reason. Ours are not starvation strikes. Wages are good, and likely to be so from the condition of the labour-market. It is a case, therefore, that ought to admit of the same common-sense course that is taken in other like cases. To destroy at once the present means of subsistence in the hope of enlarging them, is like burning down your house in the hope of improving it! In every other class of people except our workmen, this method of endeavouring to mend insufficient pay, is usually thought the very extremity of mad imprudence.

A man who is receiving less than his due, or what he thinks less, (as a clerk in a bank, for example, or a poor curate), naturally endeavours to better his condition, but never dreams of letting go his hold of what keeps him from starving, till he has got something better; any more than a drowning man will quit his plank for nothing. Here and there a fool may act thus; but he is called a fool for his pains. It is only among our workmen that such insanity becomes epidemic, and is called by soft names. To act as men do in a strike, even if they have reason to complain of their wage, and justly refuse to put up with it without an effort to increase it, is much as if the clerks in a bank, having a strong conviction that they were underpaid, should resolve some fine morning to leave their desks in a body, and take their chance of suddenly finding another berth,—wisely hoping in the meantime that their past savings, out of that same insufficient income, may enable them to live in idleness!"

"Let us try anything and everything," said our host; "but among other things, let us remember the advice of our friend here, to call things by their right names. If the public will but learn to call *this* evil, which is eating more and more as a canker into our national prosperity,—by its right name; an evil which, even in the judgment of my son, involves at least drivelling folly, since by the very terms of the contest

the entire prize of 'profits,' for which both parties contend, absolutely vanishes the moment they begin to fight for it; an evil which encourages periodic and wholesale idleness in large portions of our population, and in that way leads to the moral ruin of thousands; involves in want and suffering multitudes of women and children; fills the workhouse and the pawnbroker's shop; increases the public burdens; wastes the funds which thrift had put by for sickness and age; encourages all kinds of ill-will between class and class; disorganises the relations of one branch of trade after another, and may possibly (if it goes on as it has gone on of late years) lead to gigantic struggles in which important portions of our trade may flit altogether; which reverses the policy of Free Trade, restores in another form the evils of protection and monopoly, and destroys in thousands of cases the very essence of personal liberty; if the public, I say, will agree to call *this* evil by the right name, and look upon every organiser or abettor of strikes or lock-outs as a traitor to his country; if the public press will uniformly speak of these things as flagitious as well as absurd, instead of adopting the measured tone it too often does, the frown of society will do much to abate the nuisance,—probably far more than the legislature can ever do."

"And let me tell you, Mr. Charles," said Mr. W——, "that if you are anxious for the safe extension of the

franchise which you advocate,—and I suppose all of us would be glad continually to increase the area of the representation in proportion as knowledge and education descend among the people,—there is no one thing that is so essential, as to show the working classes the folly and wickedness of strikes. Though little may be said about it in Parliament, the thing that is chiefly running in almost everybody's head, who has doubts about the propriety of Reform, is the fear engendered of the gigantic strikes which have pestered the country of late years. They are an example at once of the ease with which, it is too plain, the masses *might* be moved in any given direction by means of artful leaders, and of the preposterous and mischievous objects to which this immense and compact force *might* be applied. To give the masses political power will, in the estimation of many, saddle the country with Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea. Indeed if they have no more wisdom in wielding political power than they display in the matter of strikes, and exhibit the same blind subserviency to a few artful leaders, who organize and marshal them, as they do now, their combined action might end in that simple partition of political privileges, whereby the poor should make all the laws, and the rich pay all the taxes."

IX.

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS AND CHIEF
SECURITIES AGAINST THEM.

THE stimulus (enormous as it is) which the Railway has given to travelling, has by no means reached its limit ; and yet, considering the alarming accidents, or rather terrible catastrophes, which even now periodically frighten the public when the railway system is working under a more than usual strain, it is impossible not to look at the future with some apprehension, and to speculate on the best modes of diminishing the increased perils which our ever increasing mobility must occasion. As the subject is of vital interest to us all, (concerning as it does no less than life and limb), any man who thinks he has any suggestion to offer that may be, in the smallest degree, useful, needs no apology for uttering it, even though it should prove to be of no more significance than the cobbler's criticism on Apelles.

Though it is easy to trace specific "accidents" to specific proximate causes,—a pointsman's forgetful-

ness, a plate-layer's negligence, the breaking of a coupling-chain, and so on,—yet the *times* at which the most serious of them have occurred—their general *periodicity*—seems to show that the “cause of causes,”—that which for the most part involves these proximate causes,—is the over-taxing of the powers of the railway in times of pressure, till the tension makes it, in some point of construction or management, give way.

That in the *long run* it can never answer the purpose of any company to attempt more than can be done with due regard to the public safety, will perhaps be granted by everybody. *That* Railway would ultimately succeed best which, having all the trains it can *safely* run steadily full, kept time like the sun; insured by the utmost regularity of working a *minimum* of accidents, and therefore of losses and “compensations:” the “catastrophes” of which were remote traditions; which inspired people with as much confidence when they stepped into its carriages as when they stepped into their beds. It would pay best, just as in the old coaching days, *that* coach paid best,—not which was stopping at every turn to “tout” for passengers, or offered (in the madness of competition) to take passengers for next to nothing, or even to pay them for the honour of patronizing it, that it might not be empty, or made itself top-heavy by taking half-a-dozen supernumeraries on the roof,—probably only to

“spill” them all at the bottom of the next hill,—and so became a synonym for irregularity and disaster ; but the steady-working four-in-hand, that kept time like the chronometer in the guard’s pocket, the clank of whose harness beat like a metronome, and which, inspiring the public with unbounded confidence in its punctuality and *safety*, always came in full, inside and out.

In discussing the best management of the railway system, in prospect of the still indefinite increase of travelling, a preliminary question presents itself, which *ought* to be answered readily enough, and yet which at present does not seem so much as asked :—namely, “What is the primary object which should be kept in view by all railway companies ? Is it to convey only as many people and as much merchandise as *can* be conveyed by them, or to attempt to carry the whole world, should the whole world think proper to be set upon wheels on any given day ? in other words, Is the object to do only what is within possibility, looking at the uttermost limits of the capacities of the rail in relation to the public *safety* ; or to resolve never on any occasion to refuse a passenger, or compel him to go by the next train or on the next day, even though the whole human race were crowding on to the platform ? One would think that if there was any difficulty in answering such a question, it could only be because it was absurd to ask it ; and yet from a certain

vague notion, contracted from the fact that the system has (somehow or other) met the strain made upon it, it seems to be taken for granted that no matter how many millions may demand to go in the same direction on the same day, the railway is bound to extemporise as many trains as may be necessary to convey them; that it is not to be restricted (or to restrict itself) to taking only so many as with a proper regard to the safety of the public,—after duly considering the capacities of iron and machinery, the powers of mortal endurance on the part of officers, porters, and drivers, and the inflexible limits of the twenty-four hours,—*can* be conveyed on the same day? Nor can it be denied, that the great facilities for travelling offered by the rail, and the generally ample supply of locomotive power for everybody,—that is in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and perhaps for 300 days out of the 365,—have not unreasonably made Englishmen a little impatient of considering whether there be any limit at all. And yet it is plain that, for certain portions of the year at all events, we are rapidly approaching the point at which it will be necessary to consider this question, and perhaps by-and-by it will be necessary to consider it all the year round; for while the love of travelling may be stimulated without limit, the capabilities of men and metal, but, above all, the hours of the day, are restricted. Within a certain interval, it cannot be safe to despatch one train after

another; still less to chuck upon the rails (so often and so perilously done now) any number of *occasional* trains, to take their chance of so dodging the regular trains as neither to cause nor to suffer a breakdown.

There is thus a point,—to which in the daily increase of travelling we seem to be approaching,—which will compel us to ask, whether railways shall be expected to carry everybody at any given time, so that if any man be left behind, he shall have a reasonable right of grumbling; or whether they shall be bound to do only what is *possible*? On those occasions on which the principal pressure is felt,—that is, in times of universal holiday-making,—we have clearly passed the limit in question; and hence chiefly those terrible accidents, which occur with pretty constant uniformity just when the capacities of mind and matter are overtaxed, and the whole system of railway machinery and management is working at high pressure.

As travellers have come to be impatient of supposing that if the whole world wants to move in a particular direction at a particular time, the whole world should not be instantly accommodated, so the “Companies,” like other mortals sitting “at the receipt of custom,” are exceedingly unwilling to refuse anybody’s money; and are prone to believe that what it is their interest to do, it is also quite possible for them to do. And this is so natural a state of mind for all directors and

shareholders to fall into, that it would perhaps be perfectly idle to say one word on the subject, were it not that there is another side of the question ;—namely, whether, as railway travelling still increases, it may not be possible to realize greater, because more secure and less fluctuating profits, by working the railway system, even at the busiest time, only up to that *maximum* of its resources which shall be strictly consistent with the conditions of safety and regularity, (running as many trains as it is *possible* to run under these conditions, but always well laden, and always punctual), than by extemporizing a number of trains at any moment of pressure,—thus deranging the whole system for the time being, and occasioning accidents so frequently and on such a scale as must dip deeply into the profits of the shareholders to repair the mischief to the railway *plant* and compensate the injured passengers.

Nor is this the only injury which an increasing *percentage* of accidents would inflict on railway interests ; it would infallibly check the growing passion for travelling. The disposition has been developed by the comparative safety, combined with the rare facilities and conveniences, which the railway offers ; and if the safety be diminished, and in proportion as it is so, the motive to travel will at last adjust itself as exactly to the measure of public confidence as the stock markets to similar causes. It is quite a mistake to suppose that because people probably travel ten times as much

as formerly, therefore they *must* continue to do so, or that nothing can henceforth alter the habit. It will depend entirely on the guarantees for the safety, and even in a large degree on the continuance of the conveniences, of travelling. At certain times and in certain localities this feeling is already beginning to operate in an appreciable degree. In one large city, where for one week in the year, the whole railway system seems to be given up to a sort of Saturnalia of cheap-pleasure trips, it is not uncommon to hear folks say, "We never, if we can help it, travel in that week. It is hardly safe; and from the general derangement of the railway system, the enormous delays and want of punctuality of the trains, it is anything but pleasant." A great part of the travelling for pleasure will certainly be contracted by any considerable diminution of the advantages which have occasioned its increase; even as regards business, people often *can* dispense with travelling, and *will*, if they have to pay too high a price; they often take the rail simply because they can transact their business a little more expeditiously and effectually in person than by letter; but in a thousand cases the delays of the post will be preferred to any appreciable augmentation of danger to life or limb.

If then the object be, not absolutely to convey all that may possibly wish to go on a given day and direction, but as many as the capacities of a railway (taxed if you please to near its *maximum* of power)

can convey with safety, and, in order to that end, with perfect regularity, the question with railway directors (or, if they will not entertain it, with Government) should be: "What is the rolling stock of any given railway?—what the staff of officers and porters?—what interval must, at the least, be allowed between any two trains?"—and, viewing these conditions together, "How many trains, and of what magnitude (so as not to endanger a breakdown by the mere enormity of weight, nor, in case of collision, frightful aggravation of mischief by their momentum), can be sent off and taken to their destination punctually in the day?" Up to this maximum any railway may be permitted to work; but beyond it, surely none but a madman would urge it, even though half the world were waiting for the means of transit. It does not follow, of course, that a railway should be *always* working up to this point; though at certain seasons, even now, it may well be expected to do so, and probably the time is not far distant when the amount of travelling will be such as to exact it all the year round. But though they may work sometimes within this limit, they should never be allowed to exceed it. Nor should the variations (as is too often the case now) be sudden and capricious, nor should any movements be improvised for the day. Regularity and punctuality—the making any system work (as we say) like a *machine*—can be attained only by doing the very same things day by day; any *programme*,

therefore, should be, for a prescribed interval, inflexible as the laws of the Medes and Persians, "which altered not." Nor can there be any great difficulty in this matter ; for since the times of greatest pressure, as Whitsuntide, Christmas, and Easter, are as well known as the four seasons: so, if a railway then work at a *maximum*, all may be duly calculated and provided for beforehand. The trains for those exceptional periods should be duly published, and no deviation in the shape of *occasional* trains allowed. If it be said, "But would it not be hard to allow any people to be left behind?" the answer must be, "Would it not be harder if any were killed to accommodate them? The argument takes for granted that as many trains are permitted to go as the railway rolling stock, plant, and staff, and the inflexible limit of *time*, will allow to go with safety ; that is, the utmost is done that the fairly-computed powers of the railway can perform. Do you wish that it should do more that it can do?"

Supposing it laid down as a principle by any railway company that it would allow of no extemporaneous trains, or sudden departure from its settled programme ; that only such and such a number of trains, of given magnitude, should start during the twenty-four hours, then the ambition (as it would be the true glory) of its Directory should be to take the uttermost pains to make the entire machinery work with something approaching the equable movement of some of the steam engines

attached to our great factories;—engines which the engineer takes as much pride in as a captain takes in his ship, and whose well-oiled joints move with all the regularity of clock-work, all the smoothness of animal mechanism, and almost the noiselessness of an infant's breathing. And this might be done under such conditions as those just specified,—adjusted as these would be to the capacities of the Railway itself, and not the possible demands of the public. Then, the same duties having to be performed in the same manner and measure by the same officials day after day, and the daily routine becoming as fixed and familiar to all concerned as in a well-ordered factory or a well-drilled army, we might look for a rarity of accidents and a degree of punctuality which it were utopian to expect now. Then, would directors and shareholders boast that for so many years no accident of any kind had taken place on *their* line, and reap well-earned reputation and public confidence, and consequently solid profit too, from the proverbial punctuality of their trains. Then, might we hope that even those mythical fractions of five minutes, within the visionary limits of which Bradshaw often mockingly tells us that we are to start or arrive, but which are felt at present to be simply droll, might be counted upon. Then we might really expect to arrive or start at 11 '58 a.m., or 5 '59 p.m., those shadowy epochs which are now paraded with strange hypocritical *purism* of

punctuality,—much as if a man notorious for never keeping an appointment promised to meet you at three seconds and a half to ten, or between the third and sixth stroke of twelve ! Then would officials on the line, and the plate-layers (source of terrible danger !), counting on the immutable arrangements and perfect punctuality of the trains, know within a fraction of a minute precisely at what time in any given locality such and such a train might be expected, and provide accordingly. Then would it be the triumph of two trains to pass each other daily within a dozen yards of the very same spot, as it used to be of two first-rate coaches in the old coaching days, to arrive at the same moment at the same stables to change horses.

It would be well to remember, that it no more follows, because we have “railways,” that the whole population can go in the same direction on the same day or hour, than it followed in the palmy days of coaches, that all who might desire to travel by the four-in-hand in consequence of its wonderful superiority over the old waggon, could go by it. In those days nothing was more common, as those of the last generation can remember, than for passengers to postpone their journey till the next day, or even in times of pressure, for several days ; at all events, to take security against such accident, by bespeaking places long before the time.*

* Nor need it be apprehended that if the number of trains

And when, in those days, men could not go, they did not think it reasonable to ask that every spavined jade, and every tumble-down vehicle, and every indifferent Jehu, should be pressed into the public service ; or that a system should be extemporised, by which twice as many should be carried as the legitimate provision could meet ; and least of all would they have pressed for it, if they had been told that every one of the vehicles must go in the very same ruts on the same " six-foot " roadway, with no possibility of passing one another except at certain distant spots ;—the pleasant alternatives being that all of them, however unequal in load, or however miserably horsed, or by whomsoever driven, must either happily reach those harbours of refuge, or miraculously maintain a uniform speed with the swiftest, or submit to be run down by the dashing four-in-hand ! Yet this is really no very extravagant picture of what takes place when all the world is resolved to be set upon wheels ; that is, when the holiday mania is full upon us. Old asthmatic engines, that wheeze and cough as if every

were simply determined by the justly-computed capacities of the rail, not by the possible demands of the public at some exceptional moment, any disappointment worth mentioning would accrue ; it would be trifling, at all events, as set against the order, regularity, and safety, which would be introduced into the system. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, all would still be able to go ; not only those who must, but those who wished to go.

gasp would be the last, old carriages, hardly good enough for firewood, are sometimes pressed into the service of the "excursion trains," and remorselessly interpolated in the general traffic ; and these, with the swift express, and the jog-trot ordinary trains, and the slow luggage-trains, (all keeping bad time, because the whole system is overtaxed,) are set on the same line of rails, to take their chance of dodging each other through the livelong summer day, till some fatal catastrophe awakens the public mind into common sense for a moment !

But it may be said, "One inevitable consequence of any attempt to reduce the railway system to that perfection of movement, to which, like every other great machine, it may and ought to be brought, would be, to abolish all special trains, except under circumstances of the most urgent public necessity ; for example, all extemporised 'pleasure-trip trains' must be abandoned."

I fear it must be admitted. Yet such is the popularity of those trains, and such the reputed revenue from them, that it would perhaps be hopeless to touch the subject, were it not (as seems to many of us) very possible to give the public nearly the same, or at all events equal advantages, and to secure to the railways probably as large returns, by other means.

In the first place, the system of "excursion tickets" by the *ordinary* trains, at a reduction of fare, and for

various periods—a system happily more and more acted upon—goes far to meet *one* of the objects of the excursion trains; and with this signal advantage, that as these tickets are always to be had during the season, the immense crowds which would otherwise swarm into the extraordinary “excursion trains” are broken up into small parties, going at different times, at their own convenience, and (best of all) by the *ordinary* trains; thus interpolating nothing in the railway machinery. Secondly, we cannot see why the system of ordinary return tickets at the reduced fares should not be more largely resorted to. If it can pay to grant them from Saturday to Monday, it seems very hard to suppose that they would not be equally profitable between Monday and Wednesday, or for any other three days.* Nor would they be without one special advantage to the Companies of competing lines; for it would insure the passengers coming back by the same route. Many a man has gone from Birmingham by the North-Western and returned by the Great Western, for the sole reason (*experto crede*) that he happened to be nearer Paddington than Euston at the time of returning; but if he had a return ticket, it would be well worth while to take a little trouble to return by the same line. In these

* Since this was written, the suggestion has been partially, and for certain periods, acted upon. But there seems no reason why the plan should not be general and permanent.

ways, the extension of the system of excursion tickets and return tickets, as part and parcel of the ordinary working trains, and not as an improvised supplement to them, would in a good degree prove a substitute for the extraordinary excursion trains. Thirdly, there are "excursion trains" proper, which might still be retained; for as they go on certain days, during the *season*, at a fixed hour, and as regularly as any others, they are, in fact, but part of the regular trains, only charging a lower rate; and the only caution to be observed is that they should not be of undue weight or dimensions, or such in frequency as to interfere with the perfect regularity of the working of the entire system. Fourthly, as a yet further means of meeting the difficulty in question, a company might grant to a certain moderate number of excursionists,—say, as many as would fill two or three carriages,—tickets at reduced fares by any one of the *ordinary* trains, and that too with but little additional expense to themselves. This is beginning to be done on some lines, and I should imagine might be done more frequently. It would be attended with this signal advantage, that instead of "monster pleasure trains," the parties now composing them would necessarily be divided into different groups, and go on different occasions, at their own convenience, and (which is still the chief point) by the ordinary trains; instead of forming huge separate trains, crawling along like immense

centipedes, dangerous from their bulk, and trebly dangerous as extemporaneously introduced into the system. It may not be possible to bring down the fares in such a case quite so low as when a thousand go in the same train ; nor is it, perhaps, desirable : but the slight difference of price would be amply compensated by the choice of time given to the excursionists, their greater comfort in travelling, and the greater security both to themselves and the public.

Such, and probably some other methods, might be devised for giving to the public, by the regular trains, many, if not all the advantages, of extraordinary excursion trains ; but whether the compensations be equivalent or not, it is certain that the public might well accept them as the price of the absolute abolition of these last. It ought to be, and some day assuredly will be, thought, as absurd a thing to intercalate an excursion train among the regular trains, as to let a fool amuse himself with throwing pebbles among the revolving wheels of a complicated piece of machinery, or wantonly transfusing fluids into the human circulation. The success of any system (in this case of the last importance, involving the issues of life and death, as well as the destruction or safety of an immense amount of property,) depends on the smoothness, regularity of movement, and punctuality in the working of the machinery, and to introduce sudden and

extemporised changes of functions into it is the last of absurdities. The management of the railway system necessarily involves manifold and most formidable obstacles, which must be encountered whether we will or not. But to add to them all, by every now and then casting on the rails a huge, lumbering, and, from its very nature, crowded and proverbially unpunctual train, will, perhaps, one day be regarded as infinitely more absurd than it would have been to allow the old mail coaches to make a *détour* to any village on either side their route, to “tout” for chance passengers; or to allow the twopenny postman to go out of his beat to deliver parcels on private commission. Vast machinery like that of the Post Office or the Railway, can only be brought to perfection of method and working, by keeping it strictly to its proper business, and aiming to make it, by the similarity of each day’s proceedings, as regular as clockwork.

It may be said that a great recommendation of the excursion trains is their cheapness, and so it is; but the public safety is a yet higher consideration, even were the compensations on which we have just insisted of less value than they are.

But there is also another aspect of the case. To accommodate the masses by letting them travel a hundred miles for the half, or in some cases the fifth, of what you charge the regular passengers, is all very

well ; but if the benefit to the first be attended with large diminution of the advantages promised to the last, and (what is still worse) a sensible increase of their danger, it is in the highest degree unjust. However desirable it may be to give the bulk of the population the opportunity of getting for a half-a-crown a commodity of nearly the same kind and value that you are selling to another class for a guinea, it certainly seems nothing less than downright cheating to do this by diminishing the value of that for which you have already charged the higher price. I remember hearing a man plead that no harm is done to the regular traveller who has paid a couple of guineas because five hundred excursionists in front of him are going to the same place for a third of the sum ; and that to complain, is to imitate the labourers who grumbled that the good man in the parable “ did what he liked with his own ! ” But surely a more inept appeal to Scripture authority cannot well be imagined. For the “ householder ” did not *diminish* the value of the “ penny ” he paid to each ; whereas the railway company who charges you a guinea for a ticket, and then throws down on the rails before you a monster train which does its best to delay, to hamper, and perhaps upset you, has not only given others for a much lower price the same commodity you have bought, but has seriously diminished the value of what it sold you at the higher rate. Any accommodation,

in the way of cheapness, to the masses should surely not be attended with *that* consequence.

Certainly none need wonder that accidents occur when such scenes of confusion are possible as some of us saw last Whitsuntide at one of the principal railway centres :—five hundred persons, at least, standing on the platform, and others every moment crowding in ; excursionists, and such of us as were ordinary travellers, all mixed up in hopeless confusion ; trains suddenly projected, unknown to Bradshaw or to the officials down the line ; contradictory directions from bewildered guards and porters as to which of two trains, standing on parallel lines of rail, was the train for us. After trying in vain to reconcile these discrepancies, several of us seated ourselves in one of these trains, with about as much assurance that it was the right one as if we had cast lots for it. We might as well have done so ; for we soon found ourselves sweeping past the station for which we had taken our tickets, and never halted till we had got ten miles past our destination. We were offered, it is true, a free passage back by an up-train, but not till we had had the privilege of waiting an hour for it ! We amused ourselves, during the interval, in looking at the numerous trains which stopped or rolled by to the amazement of the curious porters in this carnival of Whitsuntide. “What train is this that is coming?” said one of our party. “I don’t know, sir,” replied

the porter ; “several trains have come down this evening that we know nothing about ; and there are far too few of us to attend to them properly. But it is *holiday* time, sir, and we can’t help it.” A day or two after the same answer was given by an evidently over-worked and exhausted porter, who had been toiling to get off an express train at another great station. It was just twenty minutes after its time, and was not to stop till it was sixty miles out of town ! “There are not enough of us, sir,” he gasped, “to get the trains out at the right time ; and if folks will travel all together, and each with luggage enough to stock a pawnbroker’s shop, they must take their chance.”

I was travelling in another express train, only a few days afterwards, which also started twenty minutes after time, and vainly tried to make up for it during the mid passage ; it was the old story of the good man, who said he had lost a quarter of an hour in the morning, and was running after it all day long, and could not catch it. “This,” said a gentleman, who was sitting opposite to me, as he saw the desperate speed at which we were going—“this is one of the ways by which *accidents*, as they call them, are produced ; let us hope there are no plate-layers who have neglected their duty to-day !”

It has been suggested by a contemporary that luggage trains should never be permitted on the passenger-line of rails, but should in every case have

their own rails. This would indeed be an admirable improvement, if it can be effected ; but if it cannot, or till it can, it might be well to consider whether the day might not be given to the passengers, and the night to traffic ; whether, for example, after the night-mails had started (say at 12 p.m.), the seven next hours might not be wholly given to the luggage-trains ?

It being of such immense importance to *safety* that the utmost precision and punctuality should be attained in the movements of the entire machinery, nothing that embarrasses it and tends to throw it out of gear can be considered trivial. Now there are two things which greatly tend to produce that most fruitful source of mischief—*unpunctuality*, and which, as it seems to me, might be remedied. I may err in that supposition ; but, if not, I am sure that a reform in the points referred to would not only greatly contribute to the safe working of the system, but be of incalculable convenience to the traveller in many respects.

The first is the tormenting system of “ticket giving,” at the little crowded “hatch,” where they sell those preliminaries of a journey. You are at the station, I will suppose, in good time ; that is, a quarter of an hour before the train starts, before which, indeed, you cannot get a ticket ; though it by no means follows that you can get them then. You

leave, it may be, a lady in the crowded station, or (after vainly glancing through the throng for a porter) a quantity of luggage, in a state of orphanage, on the platform,—and rush to the little ticket-hole ; which, to your great disgust, you find still shut, and besieged by a dozen other claimants. In the rear of these, with sullen impati  nce, you take your stand, thinking that the train will certainly go without you : or, if not, that in the desperate rush of the last minute you will be separated from your companion, or (what is perhaps as bad) be divorced from your luggage ; or that this last will be left behind altogether, or made to take a journey, *not* by rail, with some one on the lookout for such strays. Meantime the door continues closed for five, I have often known it for seven, minutes after the appointed time ; you hear the clerks talking with provoking coolness behind the scenes, just as if they were not defrauding you and the public of the time the company had promised you, and in utter contempt of the admonitory taps on the portal, given by the foremost in this miserable procession of ticket-victims. At last the door opens, and you are in the stream for the window ; but your arms are pinioned close to your sides by the crowd, and you offer the most inviting opportunity to any light-fingered gentleman who may be behind you. To make the matter worse, you hear little dialogues between the seller and the buyer of the ticket, until

every moment seems an age ; you think it can never come to your turn until the very moment the fatal whistle shall be heard. “ Can you tell me,” says one to the clerk, “ whether this train stops at Muddleham station ?” “ I will tell you in a *minute*,” says the obliging clerk ; just as if minutes at that moment were to be so improvidently wasted. Another wants change for a five-pound note, and the clerk begs to know whether he has not enough in gold and silver, and the gentleman proceeds to rummage his pockets in search of it. A third is told that he has got to the wrong train ; *that* train does not stop at his station at all, and he finds he has been emphatically “ the wrong man in the wrong place,” both to clerks and passengers. A fourth asks for you know not what, but you impatiently see that you must wait while the clerk gives a written pass ; another asks for “ seven and four halves, first-class, and two second-class,” and then doubts whether the official has computed the value quite right : and so it goes on, till, if you were not hindered by the crowd, you would rush away into the train, and settle with the ticket-collectors as you might, at the end of your journey. The only consolation is the entire unanimity of execration with which the long column of victims exclaim against this unreasonable arrangement for getting tickets, but especially against keeping the “ hatch ” shut after the stipulated time. Let it be at the height of the

travelling season (as at Easter or Midsummer), or let there be some interesting affair (such as a Visitation or a fight, a race or a Church-congress) going on in the neighbourhood, and the annoyance often becomes perfectly insupportable ; and, what is worse, too often ends in *delaying the train some minutes*.

Now, why should the public be subject to this perpetual inconvenience? Why should it be impossible to get a ticket except during that magic quarter of an hour ; of some minutes of which (all too brief as it is) the public is often defrauded, and always of course, in the nature of the case, when it will be attended with the "greatest unhappiness to the greatest number," that is, when the pressure on the railway is heaviest, and the travelling mania at its height. Why should there not be a clerk or clerks with nothing else to do but to sell tickets all day long for each day's trains, like any other commodity? Nay, some have even asked why the greater Companies should not issue railway "notes," with the company's "promise to pay,"—that is, to convey the holders to the destination specified in the notes,—“on demand,” but within a given date. But if this be thought too much, why at all events might not the former of these plans be adopted? I have sometimes appealed to influential directors of railways, who have acknowledged that they see no *sufficient* reason why it should not. There will be a greater risk, it may be

said, of forged tickets. Well, of course, some risk of this kind there will be; but it need be no greater than in the case of bank-notes, cheques, or postage-stamps. Practically, it is found possible so far to guard against risk of forgery in all these things as to make the crime a rare occurrence, and an infinitesimal evil compared with depriving the world of the advantages of them. What would you say if you had to purchase every postage-stamp at the very moment you posted your letter, and that *that* moment must be somewhere in the quarter of an hour preceding the post's going out! If the system *can* be altered, it is really discreditable to the railway companies that, for so many years, they have not found a remedy. How pleasant would it be if, instead of the pressure, hurry-scurry, and chafing of the present barbarous system, the traveller could get his ticket at any time of the day; if he could get it as he casually passed, or as his servant passed, the station; and then, when the time came for his journey, have nothing to do but to take his way through the station and into the carriage, just as the train was starting. The present plan is only one degree better than that adopted (but of course soon abandoned) when the railway system first came in, namely, that of writing out a licence for each individual passenger, just as each was duly entered on the way-bill in the old coaching days!

The second point in which reform (if it can be

effected) would greatly facilitate punctuality in the trains, and add to the convenience of the public, respects the management of the luggage. To many, the thought of what may become of *that*, is the great burden of their journey; their souls may be said to be, all along, hovering between their bodies and their portmanteau. The Romans well called luggage “*impedimenta* ;” it is so in a sense never intended by them, for if it does not hinder the railway traveller’s rate of going, it sorely hinders his peace of mind. I have even known those in whom the fond care about it confessedly destroys all the pleasure of a journey! Many a nervous person in vain tries to maintain magnanimous indifference about it. He diligently inquires as to where it is placed; in what van, or on the roof of what carriage; he wants to know where it “shifts;” he takes a reassuring peep at it in the van, at those deceitful “junctions;” and is constantly afraid lest something should happen to that *other* body, to which his soul is continually transmigrating. And when it is to be ascertained whether it be safe at last, and claimed (especially if it be at the great centres and in the height of the season), dire is the scene of scrambling and selfish eagerness. What anxiety in each to be ready to pounce on it the moment it emerges from the van, lest it should be seized in the clutch of some wrongful claimant! What pressing to look into the van, in spite of re-

monstrance from guard and porter ! What peril of having the toes crushed by some descending box of enormous dimensions from the shoot which unlades the roof of the carriages !

They manage these things much better on the Continent ; even in many parts of the United States, nay even in Canada. On the Continent the chief point,—the great *desideratum* of an unembarrassed mind,—is effectually secured at once ; the beneficent despots take your luggage from you altogether, pronouncing an absolute divorce between you and it ; so that you see it no more till you have reached your destination, even though you be parted during the perilous passage of half-a-dozen junctions, or even a parenthetical sea voyage. Happy, blissful freedom from the gross encumbrance, the “mortal coil,” of box or portmanteau ! When shall this be the glorious lot of the traveller on the English railways ? When shall he enter the carriage, happily disembodied of his luggage ; stripped of his all, but all the richer for it ? When shall he be in that *dégagée* state in which he makes a long journey with nothing but his faithful umbrella to take care of ?

It is sometimes said that the impatience of Englishmen, their disposition to account time as money, and to consider the loss of every moment as a certain *per-centage* on their gains, would never allow them to submit to regulations which might be attended with a little irksome delay. To this it may be answered,

that if public convenience and safety require them, it is not very complimentary to our countrymen to suppose that they would not acquiesce ; or prefer unnecessary anxiety, confusion, and selfish scrambling, to order, and freedom from care, purchased by a few minutes' delay. But a still better answer is, that the present want of all method in this matter occasions far *greater* delay than the orderly transaction of the luggage-business would do.

But, if the Englishman dislikes the formality of the Continental method, surely a very simple modification of the present plan might be suggested, which would at least obviate the traveller's anxiety about his luggage ; and *that* would be no light advantage. The greater part of the railways already ticket the luggage, leaving the traveller to claim it, though without any guarantee that he is the right person to claim it, and without any responsibility for its due delivery to the right owner. Now, if it were made a uniform rule by the railway companies that no luggage should be put into the vans or on the roof that had not their ticket of destination affixed to it ; if these tickets were printed in duplicate, and numbered, (say from 1 to 1000, that they might not be soon exhausted, at least not by any one train) ; and if, as each was affixed by a porter to a box or portmanteau, he tore off the counterpart, and handed it to the passenger, the latter would have the guarantee in his pocket that his

luggage could not be claimed by any improper person, and all he would have to do would be to give the duplicates to the guard when his proper number of packages was handed out on the platform. This would, at all events, obviate the plague of thinking about, and taking care of, one's luggage during the transit, and all fear of its passing into any hands but those of the right owner. Those much-to-be-pitied travellers, whose minds are so apt to live in their portmanteaus, might with perfect serenity give themselves up to the newspaper or the scenery, without being troubled at stations or junctions lest any wrongful person should carry off that deposit for which they had got due security. The possession of these same tickets would enable them, when the train reached its terminus, still to arm themselves with patience ; they need not rudely press on others, or be pressed upon, in the attempt to get hold of their luggage at the earliest possible instant ; while quiet souls, who hate all scrambling, and would sooner wait half an hour than have anything to do with it, would stay till the more impatient crowd had thinned away, without any fear of being thereby defrauded of their own. If it be said that any such methodical proceedings, and a system of duplicate tickets, would cause the company some additional trouble and expense, and that they could not be expected to carry it out without a trivial charge, I fancy there are few travellers who

would object to some trifle (say a halfpenny or a penny each packet); or who would not feel that it was amply repaid by the transfer of the responsibility of the luggage to the railway authorities, and the consequent freedom from all care on the part of the traveller. For myself, I should think that for such a charge, or double the amount, I had an ample *quid pro quo*.

Some such system would be attended by two other signal advantages,—more especially if a portion of these trifling fees were spent in an increase of wages to the porters, or in increasing their number when necessary.* One is, that it would do away entirely with a practice which the railway companies earnestly and rightly, yet vainly deprecate,—a practice attended with very pernicious consequences to the public,—the clandestine feeing of their servants. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this corrupting practice—of which almost every one of us is more or less guilty, in spite of the laws of the companies—originated in extra trouble given about the luggage; now, if a small charge were made on it, and especially if it in part benefited the porters themselves, the public would have neither reason nor inclination to break the companies' laws on this score; and I am

* Whether a portion of such fair profit from a better administration of the luggage system might not enable the companies to meet any reasonable demands of the engineers better than by capriciously raising the price of a certain class of tickets, may be worthy of consideration.

firmly convinced that nothing but some such regulation as I have hinted at will correct the practice.

The second advantage of some such regulation is more particularly connected with the chief subject of the present essay,—namely, the best mode of obviating dangerous delays and unpunctuality in the trains; for, under such regulations, every traveller would naturally endeavour to *minimise* his luggage. Whether, indeed, still more stringent rules may not be ultimately required in order to limit the *quantity* of luggage, may be a question; for the present tendency to take mountain-loads of it, is a perpetual cause of delay and irregularity. But, at any rate, such regulations as those just suggested would *pro tanto* tend to diminish it. Each man who could do it, would restrict himself to a modest portmanteau, not exceeding in cubical dimensions the space allotted to him under his own seat, and would thus exempt himself from all trouble, as well as all payment in the matter; but, at all events, if he were obliged to have recourse to the van, he would put as little there as possible. At present, the want of stringent regulations as to the quantity of luggage, and especially the immunity from any fees, leads people to abuse the indulgence of the rail most unconscionably. The huge pile of luggage looks sometimes as if the folks who owned it were not merely taking a journey, but moving with all their household gods and goods to a new residence.

Packages may often be descried which ought in all fairness to go by the luggage-train,—perambulators, beds, baths, and apparently half the furniture of sea-side lodgings or shooting-boxes. The trunks of ladies, again, often assume most alarming proportions, due in part, probably (if one may profanely speculate on their mysterious contents), to the ample skirts of modern fashion. In height and breadth, and the tremendous arch of the roof, they look more like young churches than boxes.

Let it not be imagined that this excess of luggage is a thing of little consequence; it is largely connected with the want of punctuality in the trains, is often the chief cause of the delay in starting, and occasions slight additional delays at the intermediate stations,—to say nothing of the confusion it often produces on the platform of the principal termini. Anything that would tend, therefore, to contract this ever-expanding volume, and reduce it within narrower limits, would be of essential benefit to the public, and materially add to the safety, by increasing the punctuality, of the trains; and even the ladies, who now are apt to abuse their privilege, and take up more than their share of space in the vans, as they do at concerts and in churches, would have a compensation for the diminished luggage in the greater care wherewith it would be treated. I fancy it would go near to break the heart of many

a young damsel if she could see the irreverence with which her treasures, the *κειμήλια* of fashion, are often treated ; the rude violence with which they are thrown into and out of the van, or turned topsy-turvy. On peeping into it, how often may we see the huge tin boxes, with all their sacred contents, reposing on their arched roofs, to the infinite shame of irreverent guards and porters !

It would be another advantage of any arrangements which tend to reduce the railway system to equable working, and to get rid both of all *occasional* trains, and of any trains of undue dimensions, that it would divide the crowds, which now, in times of pressure, throng the platforms, and tend to throw the whole official machinery of the railway out of gear. "Monster trains" will in time lead, and indeed they have already led, to a variety of mischiefs and evils which gravely threaten the comfort, even where they do not endanger the safety, of passengers. Among them is a rapid development of selfishness, of eager and frantic impatience in each man to secure his own immediate advantage, to the utter neglect of the interests of others. The way in which a "monster" crowd of "excursionists" sometimes rush to secure their places, and thrust, and jostle, and push one another to obtain them, is, as Sam Slick would say, a "caution to behold." They look as if they had undergone a sudden "transmutation of species," and remind

one rather of pigs rushing to their troughs than of civilised creatures. Nor can this impatient selfishness be said to be a mere inconvenience; it is often most dangerous. The *fatal* railway casualties of last year include three persons who were thrown under the wheels, at the very moment of starting, by the crowds rushing into the carriages.

Another evil connected with the present system of taking unlimited numbers by the same train (and it is a growing one), is that of confounding the distinction of "classes," and defrauding him who has paid the price of a higher ticket, of the specific advantages for which he purchased it. When the train crosses some meridian where a fair, or a fight, or a race has been going forward, third-class passengers, under the pretext of there not being room enough, are often stowed into second-class carriages, and both third and second-class passengers sometimes thrust into first-class carriages,—the intruders being often not at all the more agreeable for their recent riotous companionship.

Similarly, even on the lines on which "smoking carriages" are allowed, there is so little enforcement of the general laws of the companies, that scores even of the first-class carriages stink like a tap-room. These and many other minor abuses (which are evidently on the increase), will require timely watching and correction; otherwise they will infallibly

induce a general laxity and slovenliness of management, and a disregard of all fixed regulations, that will not only seriously interfere with the comforts of the traveller, but indirectly augment the perils of the rail.

It was recently observed in one of the papers (the *Times*, if I mistake not), that the railway officials ought to be men not only of superior intelligence, but of education and culture. Nothing can be more true. As to the guards, porters, and subordinate officials, speaking generally, there cannot be a more hard-working, civil, obliging set of men. But the chief station-masters, and other principal officials ought, in every case, to be men of superior sense and information, and capable of assuming with their uniforms some of the best qualities of military officers ; they should be possessed, in a high degree, of firmness, decision, patience, self-control, a soldierly reverence of discipline—almost to idolatry ; they should be prompt to render obedience to authority where it is due to others, and peremptory in demanding it where it is due to themselves.*

* See Appendix (C).

X.

LES APÔTRES.*

THIS work will produce, I apprehend, much the same impression as the "Vie de Jésus." The reader will readily concede to M. Renan genius, learning, taste, an active fancy (only too active, indeed), and elegance of style; but he will feel, as before, that the author seems hopelessly ignorant of one simple fact,—that it is impossible to build fabrics without materials, or to burn down a house and reconstruct it out of the smoke and ashes; hopelessly ignorant of the limits which divide history from fiction.

If a man be allowed to treat the only documents to which he can appeal as M. Renan does, it is simply impossible to construct any authentic history at all. Thus the immense majority of his critics felt that his "Vie de Jésus" was a mere romance, and they will feel that his "Les Apôtres" is nothing more.

It is, no doubt, quite possible to eliminate some few incidents, some unimportant details, from any

* *Les Apôtres.* Par Ernest Renan. Michel Lévy Frères. Paris, 1866.

professedly historical documents, and yet, granting the rest to be authentic and genuine, to compose a history out of them. But how, if we reject the greater part as legendary or false—and not only the greater part, measured by mere bulk, but by quality also? How, if we reject all that is most important and characteristic, all for which the world has ever valued the documents, and without which it would regard the residuum of pretended history as fit only for Dr. Dryasdust, or the Antiquary's incomparable "Essay on the hill-fort of Quicken's-bog?" How, if in order to clench the proof that five-eighths of the whole are to be rejected as *per se* incredible, we load the author with suspicion, even where he is dealing with ordinary matters, or charge him with downright tampering with his materials, as M. Renan in his former work supposed the rédacteurs of the "Gospels," and now supposes the author of the "Acts," to have done? How, if even the last poor fraction of a dividend, mere dry details, are to be suspected; if even these remains—little better than *scoriæ* left at the bottom of the critical furnace—are so full of error that M. Renan is compelled to read them upside down, or, like his Hebrew, backwards? to re-arrange the dates, or re-adjust the circumstances? How, if all this be the case? Why then it will be said, that though a man may (as M. Renan has done) give us a romance, he cannot give us a history; his work must, in the nature of things,

be the product of guess-work and fancy. It were as feasible to write a history of the Trojan war out of the *Iliad*; nay, the task would be much the same. That "tale of Troy divine" is doubtless *founded* on fact, as are all the greatest epics and dramas ever produced by human genius. But on how much that is knowable? So little that, except on M. Renan's plan, the history would be in a nut-shell. After getting rid of all the superhuman machinery,—of old Chryses and his prayers, of the gods and their transformations, of miracles and prodigies, of the exaggerated achievements of Achilles, and very probably of Hector's death,—as but one myth the more where there were so many, and a suspected embellishment of the "self-glorifying" Grecian legend,—the history would be reduced to about as much as this: "Once upon a time there was a city called Troy. The Greeks made war against it, at what exact date is unknown, as also how many sailed thither, and who were their leaders. The quarrel is said to have been about a woman; and this may be intrinsically probable, inasmuch as a great Roman satirist says that most quarrels have a similar origin. It is said that after a siege reported to be long, but we know not how long, Troy was destroyed; which brings us to the end of this brief eventful history." There is really little difference in the two cases, except that the *Iliad* has always been accepted as fiction, and therefore no one ever thought

how much he must reject if he wished to make an authentic history out of it. The Gospels, on the other hand, have been regarded as authentic history ; but if M. Renan's method of critical distillation be applied to them, quite as little will pass over from the alembic. We shall reject as much in proportion, and *all* that is most significant. The historical element that is left will be just as infinitesimal in quantity and as insignificant in quality.

If a book manufactured in such wise, and yet purporting to be a history, is of no more than equal bulk with the rejected documents, it must be, *à fortiori*, as purely fanciful as the original was presumed to be ; for the one was at least made out of tradition and myth, but the other is made out of nothing. Yet such history has M. Renan proffered us ; nay, he has done much more. It is as if he had not only first reduced the Iliad to nothing by rejecting all its fiction, and then given us the history of Troy out of it, but in a bulk equal to the Iliad and Odyssey together ! For the Four Gospels are transformed into a volume of no less than five hundred pages, and the Acts of the Apostles into another of four. Before the theory of M. Renan's fictitious Christianity can be fairly launched, it will require ten times as much written matter as was required to make the original Christianity a great fact in the world !

His readers, however, will simply say that they

cannot receive his history on such conditions, except by his previously proving a claim to inspiration or divination ; a retro-phetic, if not prophetic, faculty. Now, as he denies all possibility of men's possessing any such endowment, they also will deny that it is possible to destroy the documents of history, and yet to reproduce it;—to reject more than half a document as *per se* incredible, reject half the remainder by the necessity of getting rid of that, throw endless doubt on the rest by indulging in all sorts of damaging suspicions of the authors, and then, by drawing on conjecture *ad libitum*, resuscitate the history which has been preliminarily destroyed !

Should M. Renan say, by way of apology for writing history on such conditions, that we see that many books—as Livy's History, for example—contain prodigies and legends which we throw aside, and yet take the history notwithstanding, I reply just as Bolingbroke did (who saw this point as clearly as any Christian can do), that everything depends on the relative value of what is retained and what is rejected. You may omit every legend, he argued, in Livy, and yet the history goes on just as well as before ; not to say better. But if you reject all that is miraculous and superhuman in the history of the Bible, all that is necessarily implicated with it, grows out of it, and has no meaning apart from it, you have nothing left;—what you reject *is* the history.

The difference, in short, is as between cutting out a corn and cutting off the head. A man may get along quite as well, and indeed a good deal better, without his corn ; but what if he has lost his head ?

My object in the present article will be simply to show—

I. That a history of the first days of Christianity, if M. Renan's view of his materials be correct, is impossible. And, II. That if such a history were possible, it is still incredible that his history should be true.

I. In order to see how nearly M. Renan annihilates the materials of his history before he begins to compose it ; how little is left which he does not summarily reject in virtue of his (I must so call it) fanatical view of the supernatural, and how uncertain he further makes that little, either by its necessary implication with such legendary matter, or by a general depreciation of his authorities, in order to reconcile us to his wholesale confiscations, let us look at the poor relics of the Acts after his successive rejections. We shall then be filled with wonder, that so portly a volume as this, of four hundred pages, has grown, not out of such a literary "mustard-seed" as the Acts, but out of less than a third of it !

M. Renan frankly acknowledges that the Acts form the principal source of our knowledge of the first days of the Christian Church ; he agrees that

they are the genuine work of Luke, the author of the third Gospel ; that he was a disciple of Paul, and Paul's fellow-traveller, wherever he so represents himself (and here, we think, M. Renan argues with great candour and acuteness, though, as we think, ruinously for his own thesis), and that they were composed in all probability before A.D. 80. Most people, indeed, think earlier; but M. Renan, arguing upon his favourite assumption that there neither is nor can be such a thing as prophecy, has a succinct way of showing that the date could not have been earlier. The Acts, he urges, not unreasonably, were composed after the third Gospel; and the third Gospel contains an express prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, which must therefore have been written after that event! Now that event did not occur till A.D. 70; *ergo*, the third Gospel could not have been composed till after that date, and the Acts later still! But let us take his own date.

Our author, then, admits that Luke was the writer of the "Acts," and that they were written not later than A.D. 80. Such is his grand authority,—his *fons gestorum*. Now, how much does he summarily reject? And how much of the little that remains can be imagined trustworthy when we appraise it on the principles by which M. Renan determines Luke's general character,—which in fact he hopelessly damages in order to give greater plausibility to his

enormous excisions of the supernatural? We shall soon see.

The "Acts" would appear not to be capable of enduring much depletion without vanishing into thin air. Luke is not, like M. Renan, a voluminous writer. The whole of this wonderful book, the very ashes of which, after M. Renan's critical incrimination, have mainly enabled him to write so goodly a volume, is contained in about thirty pages of our quarto Bibles! It is not therefore, a corpulent folio, which may be bled and bled and bled again: it must, if much be taken away, give up the ghost altogether.

Well, then, in the first place, M. Renan utterly discredits the first twelve chapters—*i.e.* nearly half; and plainly it is a necessity, for they are full of "legendary matter,"—of miracles, and alleged fulfilment of prophecy; in fact, the supernatural. They are no less legendary than the Gospels themselves. But is there not much of the legendary, also, in the subsequent chapters? Plenty, of course; and it must be deleted by the same summary method. In chap. xiii. you must sponge out the story of Sergius Paulus, and Elymas the sorcerer; in chap. xiv. Paul's healing the cripple, and the consequent apotheosis offered him and Barnabas at Lystra. Chap. xv., though it contains nothing miraculous, is, as we shall see by-and-by, quite untrustworthy on *other* grounds. Chap. xvi. is almost wholly to be rejected, for we

have Paul casting out the spirit of divination, and the miraculous deliverance of Paul and Silas from prison. In chapter xviii. we have one of Paul's visions, which, though not miraculous, but only an "hallucination," is not what it purports to be, and is therefore not historic in the sense in which it is related. In fact, all Paul's visions—the result, in plain language, of Paul's being out of his senses—vanish on the same ground. In chap. xix. you must strike out the legend of "the gift of tongues," imparted to those who, having been only baptized with John's baptism, are now baptized in the name of Jesus; the "special miracles wrought by the hands of Paul, and by handkerchiefs brought from his body;" and the Devil's discomfiture of the sons of Sceva the Jew, who attempted to conjure in the name of Jesus.* Chap. xx. contains the raising of Eutychus from his sleep of death; and chap xxi. certain supernatural warnings against Paul's

* "And this was known," says Luke, "to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." Such solemn assurances as these, when it is impossible that Luke should not know what rubbish he was filling his book with, prove that he must have been wholly untrustworthy, and make one wonder that M. Renan should not see that, on his hypothesis, his documents are no better "than old wives' fables." It is impossible to tell on what to rely, or rather, whether we can rely on anything. It is clear also that that whole generation must have been demented, to hear, unchallenged, appeals to the notoriety of facts which, if they were not true, must have been known not to be so.

going to Jerusalem, the asserted prophetic gifts of Philip's four daughters, a prophecy of Agabus, and a vision of Paul. Chap. xxii. contains the account of Paul's miraculous conversion, already rejected in Acts ix. ; and to what M. Renan reduces that, will be seen by-and-by. In chap. xxiii. you must reject another "vision" of Paul's ; that is, another "illusion," which Paul mistook for a supernatural revelation,—altogether unhistoric therefore as it stands. In chap. xxvi. we have the narrative of Paul's miraculous conversion again. In chap. xxvii. we have another "vision" on the occurrence of the shipwreck. From chap. xxviii. you must reject Paul's escape from the "venomous serpent," and the miraculous cure of the "father of Publius," and "many others" in the island.

Thus, there is scarcely a chapter in which the sponge is not to be liberally used, and in many nearly the whole is to be erased. The matters retained, and which are insignificant except in connection with the presumed supernatural substratum, would occupy, as near as we can make out, about half the thirty quarto pages !

But is the whole of even this to be received ? By no means. In order to show that Luke may have been weak enough to incorporate into his book all these "legendary matters," M. Renan invests him with all those infirmities which he has found it necessary to ascribe to him as the author of the third Gospel, and

adds others which, almost *totidem verbis*, but certainly by necessary logic, prove that he was also a knave. All this, M. Renan does without seeming to recollect that he is thereby annihilating his historic materials, and sawing away vigorously at the bough on which his own feet are planted.

In virtue of his view of Luke's character, the whole of chap. xv., and the entire story of St. Paul's first interview with the Church at Jerusalem,—of the Council, of the Decree, of its publication and circulation, the cordial understanding between the "Twelve" and the Apostle of the Gentiles,—is nothing more than a politic fetch of Luke, to conceal the fierce antagonism and hopeless incompatibilities which really divided the Petrine and the Pauline factions. We must, therefore, strike our pen through nearly the whole of chap. xv., and a part of chap. xxi. for the same reason. In this last case it is impossible not to infer that Luke is deliberately playing the rogue, for he avouches himself to be an eye-witness of the facts, thus identifying himself with that very "we," the use of which M. Renan justly takes for so strong an argument that Luke is really the author. His words are, "When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly, and the day following Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present."

In like manner Luke is made to pervert or tamper with the facts in many other cases. If the following

portrait be true, it is wholly impossible to depend on one syllable he says :—

“In two or three circumstances, his wish to make things smooth—*ses principes de conciliation*—has made him seriously falsify the biography of Paul ; he is inexact ; and makes omissions very strange in a disciple of Paul ” (p. xiv.). “He was ill-informed about Judaism and as to the affairs of Palestine ; he scarcely knew anything of Hebrew ” (p. xviii.). “The author seems to avoid saying anything that might wound the Romans. . . . He played much such a part as an Ultramontane historian of Clement XIV. . . . He was the first of those accommodating historians, happily self-satisfied, who are determined to find that everything in the Church is going on after the Evangelical model ” (p. xxiv.). “Historical fidelity is for him a thing indifferent—edification is everything ” (*ibid.*).

Most amusingly does M. Renan infer Luke's strong Roman sympathies from his recording that Paul pleaded his Roman citizenship at Philippi, and that protection was sometimes afforded by the imperial magistrates against the persecuting spirit of the Jews. But does not M. Renan see how all this bears on his argument? If these facts really occurred in the history of Paul, how could poor Luke help narrating them just as they were? and how is it to be hence inferred that he was partial to the Romans? If they did *not* occur, or *so* occur, does not M. Renan see that he compels us to reject a further indeterminate, but large, portion of what little remains of his history,—already exhaling in smoke?

Further : our author says that Luke, having in his Gospel apparently placed the Ascension on the *same*

day as the Resurrection (though he really does nothing of the sort),* deliberately alters his story in the first chapter of the Acts. The latter statement shows, he says, "a more advanced stage of the legend," for it makes the Ascension take place at the end of "forty days." M. Renan forgets (who else can forget ?) that if it be so, Luke is clearly so hopeless a bungler, or so thorough a rogue, as to make it utterly impossible to receive any statement of his as trustworthy. Suspicion must taint everything.

Even M. Renan finds it somewhat surprising that Luke should have left such a glaring discrepancy (entirely, however, of M. Renan's own making) between the last verses of his Gospel and the first

* It is astonishing to see how readily M. Renan finds in his documents anything he likes to find there, and how completely he loses sight of all that is opposed to any present statement he happens to be making. It is clear that though the verse in Luke, recording the ascension, comes immediately after the account of the resurrection, no note of time connects them ; and it is plain that Luke *could not* have meant that the ascension took place on that day, for he has described the appearance of Christ to the disciples after the return of the two from Emmaus, and when it was already night ! M. Renan can see clearly enough, when it answers his purpose, that the Evangelists do not intend to imply that consecutive incidents are to be always taken as immediately following one another in point of time. For an example, see p. 33, where, strange to say, this very case is brought forward (it being now our author's cue to *disintegrate* the recitals in John xxi.) as an example of the practice of the Evangelists of giving, as if they were consecutive, facts separated by months or weeks !

verses of the Acts, and which he might by a single stroke of his pen so easily have removed. Strange enough, he thinks it sufficient to say that the authors of the Gospels and the Acts troubled themselves but little about accuracy ; but it is still more strange that he should think this will account for such shameless *inaccuracy* in an author who (according to M. Renan's own admission) shows himself in the latter part of the Acts, "astonishingly accurate !"

Of these charges against Luke, no doubt many of M. Renan's critics will give—what is very easy—abundant refutation. But for me, I simply take M. Renan at his word. Let all he says about Luke be true, and he has nothing on which to rely for his history of the "origin of Christianity." He is simply without materials, and he has (as in his former work) been creating history, and not writing it. He has given us a sufficient *caveat* against relying on anything from such an author as Luke, if we only take into account his negligence and blunders ; but these, combined with the solemn professions, at the commencement both of the Acts and of his Gospel, of conscientious research and scrupulous sifting of evidence, prove that he can be no less than an incorrigible knave.

And yet it is from such a document, the materials of which are to be rejected by wholesale, and on whose remaining statements the greatest possible amount of

suspicion must rest (as the necessary result of M. Renan's view of Luke's character), that our author tells us the history of the origin of Christianity must be chiefly constructed! What value can attach to his construction, unless M. Renan be inspired, though Luke was not? or unless he has a real power of divining the past, analogous to what he considers the fictitious power claimed by the ancient prophets, of divining the future?

II. I proceed to show that if it were possible to write a history of Christianity on M. Renan's principles, the history he has given cannot be the true.

Strauss regarded M. Renan's "*Vie de Jésus*" with something of Malvolio's "austere smile of regard;" complimented him, indeed, on his popularity, but at the same time expressed entire dissent from some very vital parts of his system. In truth, it was much as if one heard Ptolemy congratulating Copernicus on the success of his philosophy; for if Strauss was right in those points, it is certain that Renan was egregiously wrong, and if Renan was right, Strauss was egregiously wrong. What the latter will say now, I know not; but if he has any of an author's love of his offspring, it is to be apprehended that though he may still "smile," it will be with tenfold "austerity:" for he will see that in many places throughout this volume M. Renan's system is little better than a resuscitation

of that of Paulus of Heidelberg, and the other naturalistic interpreters,—to which it was imagined that Strauss himself had long ago given the *coup de grâce*, and which indeed had by its Talmud of absurdities wearied out the patience of all mortal men. Strauss's work really did excellent service in this respect ; and though a triumph over such a phantom may be supposed as small an achievement as Don Quixote's victory over the wine-skins, the work was done *con amore*, and with entire success. He will be petrified to see the monster, so often pierced by his critical sword, coming to life again, like one of those champions in the Valhalla, who was no sooner slain than he rose to his feet, ever ready to renew the contest. Yet so it is. M. Renan might have been a sort of Rip Van Winkle, and slept through the din of the critical strife of the last forty years, for any effect that the innumerable refutations of Paulus and his school have produced upon him. As that school resolved every miraculous occurrence of the New Testament into some misinterpreted natural phenomenon or ordinary incident, which the simplicity or zeal or morbidly-excited fancy of Christ's disciples transformed into the supernatural ; as it supposed these men often, and even simultaneously, (wonder of wonders !) making these blunders,—taking flaming flambeaux for stars, white graveclothes for living and speaking men, Roman soldiers for angels, electric phenomena for the Transfiguration or the

Descent of the Spirit, and a thunderstorm for half a hundred things ; so M. Renan is perpetually working out his intractable problems by essentially the same machinery. The difference is mainly this ; the phlegmatic German would perhaps attribute more to the stolidity—not to say stupidity—of the good folks who thus took “wind-mills for giants ;” M. Renan, with a more mercurial temperament, would chiefly attribute their eccentric, transformed “sensations” to a distempered imagination, or rather to downright maniacal illusions. Both theories suppose the hallucinations to be frequent, and often simultaneous in many individuals ; so that all at the very same time see the same visions and dream the same dreams, and ever after obstinately and soberly take them for realities !

It is hardly worth while at this time of day, and after Strauss’s demolition of all the idle fancies of the elder naturalism, to ask how the wonderful men,—who have left us a system of religion which M. Renan acknowledges to be “a new religious code for humanity,” and who have consigned it to such documents as have ever since kept the world spell-bound in enchanted error,—could be such “moon-calves.” I shall content myself with laying before the reader some examples of M. Renan’s application of his principles, perfectly convinced that most people—even the majority of sceptics themselves—will say, “In

whatever way the transactions of which it is sought to give an account took place, sure we are it was not in *this* way; it is impossible to believe that a number of persons should go suddenly, simultaneously, harmoniously, and unchangeably mad, unless we become as mad as they; and if it were so, it is just as easy to believe a miracle in the ordinary sense." To suppose that such a system can be any defence to the sceptic, is to mistake a sieve for a shield.

And, first, let us trace the genesis of the Resurrection,—as to which, whether the Apostles "dreamed dreams," or not, Paulus and M. Renan certainly do.

It is, I know, a difficult point to manage. Even Strauss, (who acknowledges that the revolution which took place in the character and bearing of the Apostles seems to indicate that something extraordinary had transpired in the interval between the death of Christ and the day of Pentecost,) evidently finds it hard to account for the facts on his much-enduring system of myths.* Events, in truth, were too quick for their

* M. Renan also admits that at the entombment of Christ his disciples were plunged, as they naturally would be, into profound despair of their Master's cause. If it be supposed, as it well may, difficult to conceive how they should so easily be duped by their own morbid illusions, M. Renan meets this antecedent improbability by feigning (what is not very consonant to human experience when once death has set its seal on our hopes) that "Death is a thing so absurd when it strikes down the man of genius or the hero, that the common people believe not in the possibility of such an error of nature. Heroes never die" (p. 3).

slow growth. No forcing-frames could produce such prodigious mythical mushrooms in so short a time. Even he, therefore, without adopting it, seemingly relents a little towards the "natural system" which he had so often transfixed with his critical arrows. He takes care, it is true, not to commit himself to it, nor attempts to justify it as applied in detail. On the contrary, he is too cautious for that, and admits that if it be resorted to as a general solvent of the facts related in the Gospels, it must break down.* Here he shows his judgment. I suspect he will hardly thank M. Renan for venturing to approach so near the facts, and pretending to disclose the very psychological springs, wheels, and wires by which the automaton seemed endowed with a preternatural life. M.

M. Renan cites, as an instance of analogous enthusiasm, a somewhat unlucky example: "At the moment of Mahomet's death Omar rushed out of the tent sabre in hand, and declared that he would strike off the head of whoever should say that the Prophet was dead." Nevertheless, neither Omar nor any one else believed otherwise! In striking contrast with our author's rhetorical flourish is the express and reiterated declaration of the Evangelists (of which, however, he takes little notice) as to the persistent incredulity with which the Apostles received the tidings of their Master's resurrection; none (if we are to believe them) receiving the fact on any other evidence than his personally appearing to them.

* See vol. iii., p. 369, 4 ed., En. Tr. In the recent edition he seems to approach M. Renan's position, in the stress he lays on the "illusions" of Mary Magdalene as the initial step in the development of the Resurrection.

Renan, after some essays in this kind, appears to be haunted with a consciousness that his efforts will not prove perfectly successful, for he concludes his second chapter by saying : " Let us draw the veil over these mysteries. In a religious crisis, everything being considered Divine, the greatest effects may be produced by the most contemptible causes (*des causes les plus mesquines*). " This does not seem very satisfactory or perspicuous ; and as M. Renan has *not* " drawn a veil over these mysteries," but given us a conjectural history of them, the reader must be admitted to see a little of the machinery and more remarkable properties of his little theatre. If I mistake not, even those who are inclined to sympathise with M. Renan's conclusions, will feel that he is not prudent in attempting to resolve the grand phenomena of Christianity into such *causes mesquines*, and that it is wiser to speak of possible " myths," or possible " blunders " of heated enthusiasts, without a too solicitous application to details ; in short, that prudence should lead the sceptic to throw almost as deep a veil over these mysteries as that with which the veneration of Christians covers them. But the reader shall judge for himself, by seeing how, in the absence of historical vouchers, M. Renan can give the true *rationale* of the " apparitions " of Christ to Mary Magdalene, to the two disciples going to Emmaus, to the assembled apostles at Jerusalem, to the disciples at the lake of Tiberias, and

to the crowd at his Ascension.—In the extracts the italics are my own.

M. Renan considers the real author of the Resurrection to be Mary of Magdala. He tells us (as usual, varying and supplementing the Gospel narrative with discoveries of his own), that when Mary “found the body gone,” the “idea of its *profanation* presented itself to her, and *revolted her*; perhaps a gleam of hope”—thus M. Renan cautiously prepares his way—“*darted across her mind.*” She hastens (as the Evangelists also say) to tell Peter and John. When they have paid their visit and departed, “Mary remained alone, by the side of the tomb. She wept abundantly. One thought alone preoccupied her: ‘Where have they laid the body?’ Her woman’s heart went no farther than a longing once more to embrace the well-beloved remains.” The exquisite simplicity of the Gospel narrative is not improved by M. Renan’s sentimental rhetoric; but we may pardon that. He then proceeds to the decisive moment, in which the dogma of the Resurrection was born. “All at once she hears a slight noise behind her. A man stands there.* She thinks at first it is the gardener. ‘Ah!’ she exclaims, ‘if thou hast borne him hence, tell me

* M. Renan is, of course, obliged to omit as well as to insert. Other and previous *hallucinations* are to be accounted for if the narrative is to be taken at all. Mary had *already* seen the vision of angels, and had *fancied* that they spoke to her and she to them in a most intelligible way!

where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.' In reply, all she hears is that she is called by her own name. It was the voice" (*i.e.* it was *not* the voice, but Mary's "idealism" *thought* it was the voice) "which had so often made her heart leap. It was the accent of Jesus. 'O my master!' she cries. She would fain touch him. A sort of instinctive movement carries her to kiss his feet. The light *vision* recedes, and *says* to her, 'Touch me not.' *Little by little the shade vanishes.* But the miracle of love is accomplished. What Cephas could not do, Mary has done" (pp. 10, 11). . . . "Peter saw only the empty tomb; Mary loved intensely enough to transcend the bounds of nature, and to give life to the phantom of the exquisite Master" (p. 12). "In this sort of marvellous crises" (M. Renan vaguely says) "it is nothing to see, when *others* have seen. The glory of the Resurrection, then, appertains to Mary Magdalene. *After* Jesus, it is Mary who has done most for the foundation of Christianity" (p. 13).

Pardon us, M. Renan, she did much *more* than Jesus, if your former statement (p. 10) be correct: namely, that with the conception of the Resurrection, "le dogme générateur du christianisme était déjà fondé." "Queen and Patron of Idealists" (our rhapsodist runs on), "Mary knew better than anybody to give reality to her dream, and to impose on every one the holy vision of her passionate soul. Her sublime

woman's affirmation (*affirmation de femme*), 'He is risen,' was the basis of the faith of humanity. Avaunt ! impotent reason. Dare not to apply a cold analysis to this masterpiece of idealism and love. If Wisdom refuse to console our poor human race, betrayed by fate, let Folly try the adventure. Where is the sage who has given the world as much joy as the possessed Mary of Magdala ?"

If she gave it, no "sage," it is certain, has given half as much; but M. Renan is at least a proof that if no "sage" can give the world such joy, it is at least possible to find one who does his utmost to take exactly as much away !

To make out this story, it is necessary, of course, to re-write the history. But even granting that Mary *might* be a maniac, and the sport of maniacal illusions, it might still be difficult to explain how she prevailed upon the world—which is daily favoured with plenty of maniacal revelations, of which it is not very tolerant—to receive her recital as fact.

The answer is, that all the disciples went mad together !

And so now for the case of the two disciples going to Emmaus ;—which, however, presents greater difficulty. For though poor crazy Mary (who, bedizened with so much rhetorical millinery as M. Renan has loaded her with, looks a good deal like Madge Wild-fire in her Sunday finery) may mistake a gardener—or

somebody—or anybody, for her “well-beloved” and “exquisite Master,” and anybody’s accent and voice for his accent and voice, it may not be so easy to get two people, and especially in company, to do the like. Nothing more easy, thinks M. Renan ; any of the disciples—singly, by twos, by threes, and all together—may be thus befooled.

“The two disciples talked together of the late events, and they were full of sadness. On the road a stranger joins them, and asks them the cause of their sorrow. . . . He was a pious man, well versed in the Scriptures, and ready in citing Moses and the prophets. These three good folks got intimate with one another. On the approach to Emmaus, as the stranger was about to continue his route, the two disciples begged him to take his evening meal with them. The day was declining ; the remembrances of the two disciples became more poignant ; that hour of the evening meal they all recalled ‘*avec plus de charme et de mélancolie !*’ How often had they seen, at that very hour, the well-beloved master forget the cares of the day in the *abandon* of gay conversation, and animated by some drops of generous wine, speak of the wine he would drink new with them in his Father’s kingdom. . . . The gesture with which he used to break the bread and offer it to them, after the manner of the master of the house among the Jews, was profoundly engraven on their memory. Full of a sweet sadness, they *forgot* the stranger” (how *he* comes to break the bread as master of the house, M. Renan does not explain) ; “it is *Jesus* they see holding the bread, then breaking and offering it. These *souvenirs* so preoccupied them that they did not perceive that their companion, pressed to continue his journey, had left them. . . . The conviction of the two disciples was that they had *seen* Jesus. They went back in all haste to Jerusalem” (pp. 20, 21).

Hereupon a similar “hallucination” takes possession of all the assembled disciples. “They were

greatly perplexed," says M. Renan, who, on some points better informed, or at least *otherwise* informed, than were the Evangelists, tells us how they were engaged. "Each told his impressions, and the reports he had heard. The general belief" (contrary to the express declaration of the Gospels),—"already ruled that Jesus had risen. . . . The two disciples recounted what had happened to them. . . . The imagination of all was vividly excited. The doors were shut for fear of the Jews. Cities in the East are dumb after sunset. The silence then, within, was very profound ; all the little noises produced by chance were interpreted in the sense of the universal expectation. Expectation *ordinarily* creates its object. In an interval of silence, a light breath passed over the faces of the assembly. In those *decisive* moments, a current of air, a creaking window, a chance murmur, fix the belief of a people for ages. At the same time that the breathing was felt, they *thought* they heard sounds. *Some* said they had distinguished the word *Schalom*, 'Peace.' It was the ordinary salutation of Jesus, and the word by which he signified his presence. It is impossible to doubt any longer ; *Jesus is there* ;—there, in the midst of them. It is *his* voice ; each recognises it" (pp. 21, 22).

All this is a pure fancy-piece, of course, and *per se* a tissue of improbabilities. Meantime the Evangelists know nothing of the business, though they say more in

half the compass: they know nothing about "little noises," or that the disciples fancied they heard something; but they make clear, positive averment that Jesus appeared in the midst of them and spoke to them. "Some pretended," adds M. Renan, (arbitrarily transposing, as is his wont, the incidents of the Evangelists, and shifting the time and circumstances,) "some pretended that they had seen the mark of the nails in his feet and hands."

Then come, in another chapter, the scenes by the lake of Tiberias, with more wonders of *simultaneous hallucination* still.

"Once the disciples had fished all night and caught nothing. All at once their nets are filled. It was a miracle. It *seemed* to them that one had said to them from the shore, 'Cast your nets on the right side.' Peter and John looked at one another. 'It is the Lord,' said John. Peter, who was naked, hastily threw his fisher's coat about him, and threw himself into the sea to rejoin the *invisible* adviser" (p. 32). I say nothing of the perfectly arbitrary version, here as everywhere, given of the narrative. Suffice it to say that, apparently, in order to keep the "invisible adviser" invisible still, M. Renan represents this incident as occurring at a quite different time from that which John in chap. xxi. has immediately connected with it,—*i.e.* the scene by the fire which is found kindled on the shore; for it is our author's prerogative

to separate incidents which he finds conjoined, as well as to join incidents which he finds separated. And so M. Renan, with his usual formula (which reminds one irresistibly of the nursery-story style), begins again: "One day, at the close of their fishing, they were surprised to find a fire of coals, fish placed thereon, and bread by the side." As usual, a vivid *souvenir* of the repasts of "auld lang syne" came over their minds, and as usual with these thrice-crazy enthusiasts, a "memory" of the past becomes a fact of the present! "Bread and fish always made an essential part of those feasts. Jesus was in the habit of offering them. After the repast, the disciples were *persuaded* that Jesus was seated at their side, and had presented these viands to them" (p. 32, 33). Here again the narrative of the only document we have is altered to an extent which makes it perfectly ludicrous in anybody to accept the new version as the true history; and if it were otherwise, the psychological miracle is quite as hard to swallow as a physical one.

But it is all in the same style. "One day Peter (perhaps in a dream) *thought* he heard Jesus three times ask him, 'Lovest thou me?' and Peter, all possessed with a sentiment tender and sad, *imagined* himself replying each time, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;' and at each time the apparition said, 'Feed my sheep'" (p. 33). The remaining incident in the chapter, respecting the fate of John, is resolved

into another dream, which the stupid Peter mistook for reality (p. 34).

But the crowning feat of simultaneous hallucination is enacted on the occasion of the Ascension. "One day," says M. Renan, "when, under the guidance of their spiritual chiefs, the faithful Galilæans were standing on one of those mountains to which Jesus had often conducted them, they thought they saw him again. The air upon these heights is full of strange *miroitements*:"—a convenient optical property of these mountains, but warranted to produce such effects only on this one occasion. "The same *illusion* which once before* had seized even the most intimate of the disciples, was once more produced. The assembled crowd imagined they saw the divine spectre figure itself in the ether; all fell upon their faces and adored" (p. 35). "The sentiment," mysteriously adds M. Renan, "which the clear horizon of these mountains inspires, is the amplitude of the world, with the desire of conquering it:" and so the disciples went forth on their presumed commission to "teach all nations." Whether the "mountains," which M. Renan knows so much about, "inspired" *him* also with any similar desire of "conquering the world," at least all Christendom, it is hard to say; but if so, it was certainly a "miroitement" that deceived him.

* Here M. Renan *confirms* his statement by a reference to the Transfiguration.

By the day of Pentecost, the tendency of the disciples, thus simultaneously to transform almost anybody they met into their lost Master, was considerably abated; but the "hallucinations" merely took a new form, determined by their fanatical expectations of "the descent of the divine Spirit." "These feelings and expectations," says M. Renan, with astonishing precision and courage, "are *daily* reproduced (in part by reading the Acts of the Apostles) in English or American sects of the Quakers, Jumpers, and Irvingians; among the Mormons; in the camp-meetings and revivals of America. We have seen them reappear among ourselves in the sect called 'Spirites'" (pp. 61-2). But he candidly adds, "An immense difference must be made between aberrations without significance and without a future, and the illusions which accompanied the establishment of a new religious code for humanity" (*ibid.*).

Everybody must grant that. But what people ask is, "How shall we know that 'aberrations' which it seems change the face of the world and establish 'a new religious code for humanity,' are identical with such as have no 'significance and no future;' such as make the subjects of them the laughing-stock or the pity of the world, or get them shut up in Bedlam? And if illusions of insanity ever did thus succeed, how is it they did so, except on the supposition that the world was as mad as the victims of them? On the

other hand, if madness really originated and published "the religious code of humanity," how came it in this one case to do more than all the "sages" did? It is enough to make one wish that all the world were mad too.

However, let us hear the maniacal *rationale* of Pentecostal illusions. "Among all the 'descents of the spirit,'—which appear to have been tolerably frequent,—there was one which left on the infant Church a profound impression" (p. 62). "One day, when the brethren were assembled, a storm broke out." (There is nothing, as already intimated, like a storm, for the naturalists.) "A violent blast blew open the windows; the heaven was on fire. Storms in these countries are accompanied by a prodigious disengagement of light; the atmosphere is, as it were, furrowed on all sides with sheaves of flame. Whether the electric fluid had penetrated into the chamber itself, or whether a dazzling flash had suddenly illuminated the faces of all, they were convinced that the Holy Spirit had entered, and that it had rested on the head of each under the form of tongues of fire. . . . That idea gave rise to a series of singular ideas, which held a grand place in the *imagination*s of the time" (pp. 62-3).

I will take another striking example of M. Renan's unlimited licence in substituting his own fancies for the documents he has destroyed; in which, as before,

he attempts to give plausibility to his views, by adopting methods which perpetually remind us of the strained naturalism of old Paulus and his *confrères*. That example is the conversion of St. Paul.*

The Acts say that Paul was a willing party to Stephen's death, and "made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and taking men and women, committed them to prison;" and in so saying, say nothing but what Paul in his Epistles says of himself. Meantime, it is revealed to M. Renan (shocked at the sudden change soon afterwards produced in this furious homicide) that "the resignation of Paul's victims often astonished him, and he felt, *as it were*, remorse; he imagined that he heard those pious women who 'waited for the kingdom of God,' and whom he had cast into prison, saying to him during the night, with a sweet voice, 'Wherefore do you persecute us?' The blood of Stephen, which had almost spirted upon him, sometimes presented itself to his troubled eyes. Many of the things he had heard of Jesus *went to his heart*. That superhuman being, who sometimes broke from his ethereal life to reveal himself in brief *apparitions*, *haunted him like a spectre*. But Saul repelled such thoughts with horror" (pp. 148-9).

* If the reader will look into Kuinoel's account of Paul's conversion—itself a *rifacimento* of the comments of several of the naturalistic school—he will see an anticipation of nearly all M. Renan has said, and sometimes almost in the very words.

The history tells us nothing of all this : it tells us that "Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter, procured letters, commissioning him" to harry and worry the inoffensive Christians, "even unto strange cities," and amongst others, Damascus. It does not tell us by what route he went ; but M. Renan is equal to all emergencies, and says "that *without doubt* he crossed the Jordan *au Pont des filles de Jacob*." This is a trifle ; but M. Renan can as easily fill up other and far more important *hiatus*. The history says nothing of what was passing in St. Paul's mind any more than about the route he took ; but M. Renan does : "The exaltation of his brain was at its height. He was at times troubled and confounded. . . . Was he sure, after all, that he was not opposing the work of God ? . . . He sank under the *charm* of those he persecuted. The more one knew of them,—those good sectaries,—the more one loved them. Now, *nobody could know them so well as their persecutor*.* At times he thought he saw the

* This is at least undeniable. No one knows lambs so well as the butcher. M. Renan's *naïveté* reminds us of a story told of a New Zealand savage. Some Englishmen had been talking of a friend they had long missed. "He was a *nice* man," said one of them. "Yes," said the New Zealander, who had been listening, "he *was* a nice man." "How !" said one of the Englishmen, "did you know him ?" "Know him !" said the savage ; "I *ate* him." It was the same sort of intimate knowledge, if we may trust the Acts, or if we may trust St. Paul himself, that the future Apostle had of these "good sectaries."

sweet face of the Master who inspired his disciples with so much patience regarding him with an eye of pity and tender reproach. What they had told of the apparitions of Jesus, as of an ærial being, and sometimes visible, struck him exceedingly" (pp. 175-6).

Then comes a brief, and as might be expected (for on such topics M. Renan is quite at home), a lively description of the scenery. The neighbourhood of Damascus he paints as a paradisaical contrast to the scenery of Iturea and Gaulonitis, and declares that, "If Paul met with terrible visions *there*, it is because he carried them in his own soul."

The history indeed is wholly silent as to the apostle's cogitations, and gives only five or six verses to the recital even of the miracle itself. But M. Renan is far more communicative. His historic muse is an effective prompter: like Flibbertigibbet behind the dull giant at the gate of Kenilworth, she sticks a pin into him, and he starts up, and, with like volubility, pours forth a flood of rhetorical declamation: "Each step that the apostle took towards Damascus awakened in him urgent perplexities. The odious part of a butcher, which he was about to play, became insupportable to him. The houses he begins to catch sight of are, perhaps, those of some of his victims. That *thought besieges* him; he slackens his pace; he would fain not go on. He imagines that he is *resisting a goad which pricks him*" (p. 179). Here M. Renan

refers us for confirmation to Acts xxvi. 8, where, however, Paul says that *Christ* said to him, "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad." Other information M. Renan has to give respecting Paul's body as well as his mind: "The fatigue of the journey, joined to this preoccupation of mind, upsets him. He, from what appears" (for confirmation M. Renan, with admirable *sang froid*, refers in his foot-note to Acts xx. 8), "was suffering from inflamed eyes, perhaps the commencement of ophthalmia. In these prolonged journeys the last hours are the most dangerous. All the debilitating tendencies of the past days accumulate; the nervous forces relax; a reaction takes place; perhaps also the sudden passage from the plain, scorched by the sun, to the fresh shade of the garden suburbs, brought on a fit in the sickly organisation, greatly shaken, of the fanatic traveller" (p. 179). Poor Paul! light or shade, or the passage from the one to the other, is equally fatal to him! "Pernicious fevers, accompanied by delirium, are, *dans ces parages*, altogether sudden. In a few minutes one is, as it were, blasted. When the fit has passed, the patient retains the sensation of profound night, traversed by lightnings, in which he sees images depicted (*se dessiner*) upon a black ground" (pp. 179-80).

M. Renan thinks that, from the recitals we possess, it is impossible to say whether any "external event led on to the crisis which gained for Christianity its

most zealous apostle:" that is, as usual, he contradicts the most express statement of his ruined document, and re-writes the history.—But whether or not there was any such occurrence, is, he says, of little consequence. He thinks the *remorse*, of which the history says not a syllable, was the true cause of Paul's conversion, not to mention the other natural causes he has suggested,—inflamed eyes, incipient ophthalmia, brain fever and delirium, the heat of the sun, the coolness of the shade, and the passage from the one to the other. But M. Renan's revelation, though not distinct as to whether there was any external concurrent or not, does not leave us wholly in the dark. That efficacious thunderstorm which has so often befriended the naturalistic interpreters, which did M. Renan such service on the Day of Pentecost, and which old Paulus particularly invoked on this trying occasion of Paul's conversion, M. Renan thinks *may* have occurred, and have had some share in the effect. "It is not improbable that a thunderstorm may have happened all of a sudden" (and here he refers with wonted precision and self-possession in his foot-note to Acts ix. 3, 7). "The flanks of Hermon are the point of formation for thunderstorms unparalleled in violence. The coolest courage cannot traverse these frightful torrents of fire without emotion." The effect of such things must have been wonderful indeed, for M. Renan assures us—though he does not explain how he

comes to know it—that “it is necessary to bear in mind that, in the estimate of antiquity, accidents of this kind were Divine *revelations*; that, with the ideas they then had of Providence, nothing was fortuitous; *each man* had the habit of referring to himself the natural phenomena which passed around him” (p. 181).

Still, M. Renan will not be quite sure of anything except the “*remorse*.” Whether ^{the} delirium of a fever or ophthalmia had upset Paul, whether a *coup de soleil* had given him the *coup de grâce*, whether lightning had smitten him with blindness, or whether a thunderstorm had toppled him over and produced a cerebral concussion which obliterated for a time his sense of sight and his common sense too, our author leaves uncertain. But one thing is clear to him; “the *souvenirs* of the Apostle in this matter appear to have been sufficiently confused.” Here, again, it is true, the unfortunate document expressly asserts the contrary; for St. Paul declares, when he gave an account of his conversion to Agrippa, that he spoke “the words of truth and soberness.”

But though not quite clear about the thunderstorm, M. Renan soon resumes the accustomed precision of his revelation. “What did the Apostle see? He saw the figure which had *pursued him some days past*; he saw the *phantom* which had been the subject of so many popular rumours” (p. 182). “The intensity of

his blindness and delirium did not diminish during three days; a prey to fever, Paul neither eat nor drank. What passed during that crisis in his burning brain, doting under strong commotion, may be easily *divined*" (p. 184). And M. Renan begins to divine it indeed, in a style which shows once more how he can not only write history without documents, but in the very teeth of them: "They spoke to Paul of the Christians of Damascus, and *in particular* of a certain Ananias, who seemed to be the chief of the community. Paul had *often heard* their miraculous powers of healing boasted of; the *idea* that the imposition of their hands might rescue him from the state in which he was, seized him. His eyes were still very much inflamed. Amongst the illusions which chased one another through his brain, he *fancied* he saw Ananias enter and make the gesture of salutation common with the Christians. From that moment he was persuaded that his cure must come from Ananias. Ananias was duly advertised of this; he came, spake *doucement* to the patient, called him 'brother,' laid his hands on him," and the thing of course is done. Paul "*thought* himself cured, and the malady being specially a nervous one, he was so" (p. 185).

It would be a sufficient reason for rejecting M. Renan's account of Paul's conversion, that—as we have so often insisted—it is pure fancy, written in

simple defiance, or rather, after utter demolition, of the only ancient documents that tell us anything about the matter, and substituting his own mere conjectures for the facts which he has discarded.

But few will hesitate to say that the theory itself is—not only beset with enormous improbabilities—but full of “psychological miracles:” at utter variance with all the traits of Paul’s character, as read by the light of his undoubted achievements, his still extant writings, and the veneration of the world.

Lord Lyttelton, one of the most diffuse and also one of the most concise of English writers (for it took him six volumes octavo to write the history of Henry II., and about one hundred pages to demonstrate the truth of Christianity from the life of the Apostle Paul), long ago showed the gross inconsistency of supposing Paul to be either impostor or fanatic, and that nothing but the truth of the history would account for the absolute and sudden revolution of his whole nature, and his thirty years’ career of immeasurable labours, toils, and sufferings, in behalf of the “faith which he had once destroyed.” On this narrow field alone, and putting out of sight all the great masses of argument for the truth of Christianity derived from other sources,—moving within this little cycle of events, and on this contracted line of proof,—this author undertook to show that the position of Christianity was impregnable.

And if he has not demonstrated it, at all events the book, as Dr. Johnson said in his time, and as we may say in ours, has never been refuted ; like Butler's "Analogy" and Paley's "*Horæ Paulinæ*," it still awaits the confutation of some adventurous sceptic.

One half of his argument, namely, that in which he proves that Paul could not be an impostor, would now be conceded by all Christendom, and would certainly be affirmed by M. Renan himself. Probably no one would dare to speak of the Apostle in terms in which the coarse Deism of the last century often libelled him.

It is a proof that controversy is not altogether in vain ; and that though progress is slow, yet there *is* progress. Nor is there ground for despair that, after the sifting investigations of these days, men will feel as little disposition to consider the Apostle a fool or fanatic, as they now feel to brand him as impostor or knave. But it were almost as easy to regard him as a knave, as to take the view which M. Renan does of him. It is impossible to recognise in the weak, doting dreamer depicted by our author, the masculine lineaments of the Apostle, whether viewed before or after his conversion ; nor is any *rationale* given of the stupendous revolution which certainly took place in him. In whatever point of view we look at him, he becomes on this theory a monster of incongruities, and his whole subsequent character, achievements, and influence in the world, incomprehensible.

1. As to the purely fanciful spontaneous "remorse" ascribed to him, we have not only his positive declaration that he felt none up to the moment of his conversion, but that he heartily approved of what he had done and was *then* doing, and thought that he was doing "God service" by it. And as he says this, so what he says is profoundly true to the philosophy of human nature. He was a fiery zealot for the Law, and impatient to sweep from the earth, by a sharp and consuming persecution, those whom he regarded as its impious enemies. Such characters, once familiar with persecution (and Paul, as he himself tells us, was deep in blood),* do not suddenly change their iron purpose, nor listen to the faint whispers of remorseful compassion. Like Lord Strafford, they are "thorough;" and it would be as reasonable to suppose a De Montfort, or a Spanish Inquisitor, or a Bonner, suddenly arrested by spontaneous remorse, as to imagine St. Paul's being so.

2. His whole previous religious character is at war with such a revolution. He was self-righteous in grain: to exhibit the perfect ideal of the then Jewish sanctity—to be the pink of Pharisaism—was, he tells us, the ambition of his life; he was not only "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," as he himself says, but a "Pharisee of the Pharisees;" and of these characters Christ himself had foretold, what was true to human

* "I persecuted this way unto the death."

nature in that day, and will be so through all time, that the openly vicious and profane might be sooner touched by the spirit of Christianity than they : “The publicans and the harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before *you*.”

3. It is impossible to account by any such theory for that instant and complete extinction of the pride of soul, the imperious will, the fiery ambition, which, by St. Paul’s own portraiture of himself, distinguished him when a persecutor ; and the exhibition, throughout his whole after-life, of the most absolute prostration of soul before another, and the most complete absorption in the being of another (and that other but the moment before regarded as a justly crucified malefactor), which the world has ever witnessed. M. Renan may perhaps say that Paul still had a strong will, still had fiery ambition ; and in one sense he had : but it was the ambition of being nothing, that Christ might be all ; it was the will to be lost, forgotten, in the glory of his Master. Such was his unconquerable devotedness, from the very moment of his conversion, to the Master whose cause he had so bitterly opposed, that for Him he was willing “to endure the loss of all things ;” in his estimate “all things were dross, that he might win Christ.” The allegiance of soul, the surrender of his whole nature to the abhorred malefactor he had the instant before deemed Christ to be, was absolute and for ever.

Now the intensity of that love with which the Jewish zealot glowed towards his Master, is not only (as it ought to be) plenary proof of the earnestness and honesty of his convictions, but proof also that those convictions in such a character as his could be produced only by the most overmastering evidence. There is something unspeakably sublime and affecting in the self-oblivion of the Apostle. Not only can none accuse him of any oblique ends or sordid designs, but he is so anxious to exhibit his Master to men's admiration, that himself, his interests, his prejudices, nay, his estimation in the very churches he planted after his conversion,—in short, everything, gave way to this one feeling. All went without a sigh or a murmur in the gratification of this intense passion. No extremity of toil or suffering intimidated him; he is ready to submit to any ignominy rather than that one loved Name should be evil spoken of, or offence given to the meanest subject of his Master's kingdom. He is willing not only to be defrauded of the honour of his labours, and superseded in the affections of his converts, but to be absolutely nothing, provided he can get men to make neither him nor others the rivals of his Master: in single-minded admiration of the only Excellence, he wishes them to think "Paul nothing, and Apollos and Cephas nothing, but ministers by whom they believed." In a word, this single feeling was the pulse of his whole life; as no other man ever

did, he lived in self-oblivion, and might say with truth, "To me, to live is Christ." No matter what his theme, he is sure to come back to Him as the centre of every thought and affection. Like the star which "opens the day," and "shuts in the night," he is never seen more than a few degrees from the luminary about which he revolves, and, like that too, is for the most part absolutely lost in its beams.

4. If it be said that St. Paul exhibits in many respects the same basis of character after his conversion as before it, the same impetuosity and energy,—this, no doubt, is in part true. But it is not the whole truth, nor the half of it. We have not, as M. Renan seems to suppose, a change of *object* merely. Paul became in many respects the antipodes of himself; his narrow bigotry was exchanged for that all-embracing charity which he has so wonderfully described, and alone, perhaps, fully practised; "which hopeth all things, believeth all things, beareth all things, endureth all things." His native pride, again, was exchanged for the most perfect humility; and his fiery impatience of opposition (which, as Lord Lyttelton and Graves have truly remarked, is an all but inseparable concomitant of fanaticism, and which flamed out every moment when Paul was a fanatic indeed) was exchanged for the most wonderful meekness, gentleness, and willingness "to be all things to all men."

Such a thorough and sudden revolution of character is hard to be accounted for by a pang of "remorse," even if we had any proof that it was felt, and even though we add a *coup de soleil* and a thunderstorm into the bargain.

5. Is it possible for a moment to imagine the doting and dreaming victim of hallucinations which M. Renan's theory represents Paul to be, the man whose masculine sense, strong logic, practical prudence, and high administrative talent, appear in the achievements of his life, and in the epistles he has left behind him? Is it such a man, as M. Renan's account of his conversion makes him, who has received so immense a homage from the world?

6. If, as Lord Lyttelton observes, St. Paul had seen any "visions," or interpreted any external incidents, in the sense of divine approbation of his Jewish zealotry and his resolute mood of persecution, it would be all in harmony with the ordinary laws of fanaticism; but that his nature should, in the very act of pursuing with fire and faggot the enemies, as he deems them, of God and man, spontaneously generate visions which turned him into a flaming zealot of the ignominious cause he had oppressed, is a paradox in human nature; it is as though a river, rushing with fury through a rocky gorge, was all at once magically arrested, and began to flow backwards. "Here," says the ordinary Christian, "if you will not allow

miracles in the world of matter, you compel us to admit them in the world of mind."

If it be said that maniacal delusions will account for anything—I answer, Certainly, for anything—except good sense, tact, and prudence (of which Paul's history and writings show he had plenty), and success in persuading the world to listen to them, a success which Paul had also in enormous measure. Unless there had been something more than his assertions to back his visions, he would have been as little believed or attended to as other madmen. If it be said that doubtless he did not remain mad, but soon recovered his reason, though the hallucination of his mad hour appeared to him a reality for life:—I answer, in the first place, that this was not akin to ordinary madness, or rather it was permanent madness *quoad hoc*. Secondly, it would not account any the more for people's believing him if he had nothing else to show; they would, as in other like cases, have touched their heads significantly and talked of the "bee in the bonnet." Nor is Paul, as a recent author has well said, "willing to accept a compliment to his integrity at the expense of his understanding; he will not have it said that he is very sincere but very mistaken. He says, 'I testify to a fact; I talk not of opinions. I am not mad; I speak the words of truth and soberness.' " *

* Binney's Lectures on St. Paul.

There is indeed a key which at once and naturally solves all these perplexities and contradictions, a thread which leads us securely through all this labyrinth; and that is the truth of the facts as recorded in the only history we have of them.

If M. Renan sincerely believes that he has accounted for the belief in the Resurrection, the phenomena of the Pentecost, the conversion of Paul, by maniacal illusion, helped by a thunderstorm or two, or some such accidents, he must not be surprised if the world should suppose *him* the subject of "hallucinations" which, though of different kind, are quite as wonderful. People will say, "the apostles wrote what they *thought* history from facts which they *thought* they had really witnessed: this good man writes a history of the same transactions with no materials at all. They at least assigned causes, which, if real, sufficiently account for all the phenomena. M. Renan assigns causes which account for nothing—except the ridicule they will undoubtedly invite." Any one knowing what the temptations to scepticism are, will comprehend the disdain with which many a sceptic, really anxious to have his doubts solved one way or other, will read M. Renan's strange "hallucinations" of historical second-sight. They will say, "We do not believe the Evangelists because they relate physical miracles; we do not believe M. Renan because he gives us no end of psychological miracles."

The great bulk of readers will prefer believing the first, until the modern dogma of the impossibility of "miracles" is demonstrated, and not assumed. On this dogma—the "question of questions" in this controversy—that which makes M. Renan and so many others construct such strange hypotheses to account for the origin of Christianity, our author said little in his former volume; he quietly assumed it. In the present volume, he has in like manner abstained from any general discussion of it. He has so far entered into it, however, as to suggest a reply to one of the objections brought against it, namely, that it is an unlimited conclusion from what must be a limited and partial experience.* Now in doing so he shows (as it seems to us) how difficult it is for M. Renan and his adversaries to discuss this point at all; for he either does not see, or ignores, the very object for which the argument he endeavours to rebut is adduced.

The case stands simply thus. Those who hold M. Renan's scientific dogma as to the incredibility of miracles, appeal to the uniformity of all their experience, and the experience of all whose experience they can put to the test, in proof of it. "Very well," an opponent replies, "if the inference is to be extended without limit, it will do for last year, for last century, or the last thousand centuries, or for any

* Introd. pp. 45—50.

multiple of them. If not, your argument breaks down. If it is without limit in its application, then there never have been events in the universe transcendental to all present experience ; nothing like absolute creation or origination of anything, or transmutation of species, or a gradual development of the world out of previous states altogether different. In consistency, you must be an atheist of the old stamp : you must believe that the world has been eternally as it is,—with the same succession of antecedents and consequents, never transcending the *present* limits of our experience.” “ No,” says the other, “ I cannot deny there have been such events, but these are not *miracles*.” “ Very well,” says his opponent ; “ call them miracles or not, as you please ; we won’t quarrel about a name ; but at any rate they resemble miracles in this *one* point (which is all I adduce them for) :—they show that the retrospective application of your inference from a given very transient experience has a limit ; they point to a period when all things (among others, by the way, your experience itself) began to be ; for you admit that there have been manifold phenomena to which that experience, which you yet make the criterion of the *possible* in the past, cannot apply. Now show us how you reconcile the unlimited inference from experience with your admission of such facts. For if such events have occurred, all present experience notwithstanding, the events (not more transcendental) called

miracles may have occurred, for anything the induction from experience can assure us; for it seems that there was certainly a period when it altogether breaks down with us."

But here comes in the most singular *tour de force* of M. Renan's logic: "To seek the supernatural," he says, "before the creation of man, in order to dispense with establishing historic miracles,—to fly beyond history,—is impossible; it is to take refuge behind a cloud, to prove what is obscure by what is more obscure. . . . We ask for the proof of an historic miracle, and they reply there must have been such things before history."

"Pardon me," the champion of miracles would reply, "you utterly mistake the whole purport of the argument. Its object is, not to establish miracles, but to effect a *reductio ad absurdum* of your assumption that they *cannot* be; to give a proof of the lame and halting character of your principle, which you apply without limit, and yet will *not* apply without limit. Miracles must, of course, be proved (if proved at all) by the appropriate evidence of any other remote fact,—as by adequate testimony, for example; evidence such in amount as shall overbalance the admitted *à priori* improbability of these occurrences; which last again will be diminished in proportion as it can be shown that sufficient reason,—a *nodus vindice dignus*,—can be assigned for their performance." The sole

object of the argument which M. Renan has so strangely misconceived is to show that the argument from uniform experience, applied to the past without limit, breaks down.

It may, perhaps, be asked how it is that M. Renan, even with the license of conjecture in which he has indulged himself, has managed to spin out those meagre fragments of the original documents which alone his principles of criticism allow him to retain, into so large a volume? It is partly, no doubt, because an author will need more ample space, if he is to invent and justify a conjectural history than he would if he transcribed one from facts ; if he writes in defiance of his documents, and with perpetual commentaries on their falsehood, than if he usually follows them. But it is also partly, and, indeed, principally, attributable to a cause more honourable to M. Renan. A large portion of the volume (and by far the most interesting part of it) really has no special bearing on the subject at all, and might as well have been introduced in a history of the Caliphs as of the Apostles. Such are the digressions on the early sects ; such, again, the graphic descriptions of oriental scenery. In the former class of subjects, M. Renan's unquestionable Jewish learning is often seen to advantage ; in the latter, his graceful imagination, and susceptibility to what is beautiful in nature and art. For example,

the chapter on the founding of the Church of Antioch has hardly a sentence bearing on M. Renan's professed subject ; but it is a very picturesque and interesting piece of antiquarian and topographical description. In truth, M. Renan's talents in this direction are so very striking, that I, for one, heartily wish, both for the sake of literature and his own fame, that he had given us books of eastern travel, and left the "*originés du Christianisme*" alone.

If I have not had space to do justice to these merits, and others of a literary kind, it is not because I am insensible to them, or grudge to admit them. None can read M. Renan, when he gets on such neutral topics, without vivid pleasure. But to take up much of the little space allotted to me in descanting on these points, while dealing with a book on which such issues are at stake, would be to imitate Nero, who fiddled while Rome was burning.

There is another point in which M. Renan's book gives unfeigned satisfaction. It is evident that, however he may consider science and theology as at present incompatible, and however dire the sacrifices which he erroneously thinks the former may exact of the latter, he by no means sympathises with those who think that the progress of science must be the destruction of religion ; he holds, on the contrary, that not only is the religious instinct of humanity indestructible, but that the higher the intellectual and

moral nature of any beings, the higher will be their religious development.

“ Rien n'est plus faux que le rêve de certaines personnes qui, cherchant à concevoir l'humanité parfaite, la conçoivent sans religion. C'est l'inverse qu'il faut dire. La Chine, qui est une humanité inférieure, n'a presque pas de religion. Au contraire, supposons une planète habitée par une humanité dont la puissance intellectuelle, morale, physique, soit double de celle de l'humanité terrestre, cette humanité-là, serait au moins deux fois plus religieuse que le nôtre. Je dis ‘ au moins ;’ car il est probable que l'augmentation des facultés religieuses aurait lieu dans une progression plus rapide que l'augmentation de la capacité intellectuelle, et ne se ferait pas selon la simple proportion directe ” (pp. 384—5).

APPENDIX.

NOTE (A), p 230.

THOUGH there was a singular division of opinion, in relation to the expediency of abolishing public executions, among the members of the recent Commission appointed to report on the condition of the Criminal Law, still even that fact shows that the question has made great progress; nor can the day be very far distant when these odious spectacles must cease.—Our Colonies are, however, anticipating the mother-country. Within a few months after the publication of the preceding essay—that is, as soon as it was possible to send a communication from the Antipodes—I received from an unknown correspondent the following letter, showing how they do this thing in Tasmania.

Hobart Town, Tasmania,

SIR,

1st June, 1865.

The position taken by you in your essay on "Public Executions" (published in "Good Words," pt. 2, 1865), may receive some support from the fact that for some years past the last sentence of the law in this colony has been carried out in a private official manner, with great advantage over the former mode.

In fact, so great is that advantage, that the colonists now wonder how such an execrable practice as "public executions" could have continued so long under the sanction of British law.

The following is an extract from our Official Gazette of 1st March, 1864:—

*“Registry, Supreme Court, Hobart Town,
17th February, 1864.*

“The following Declaration and Certificate are published in pursuance of directions contained in the Act of Council 19 Victoria, No. 2, intituled, “An Act to regulate the execution of criminals.”

JOHN ASTON WATKINS, Registrar, Supreme Court.

We the undersigned do hereby declare and testify that we have this day been present when the extreme penalty of the law was executed on the body of Robert McKavor, lately convicted at the Supreme Court at Hobart Town, and sentenced to death; and that the said Robert McKavor was, in pursuance of the said sentence, hanged by the neck until his body was dead.

Given under our hands at Hobart Town this 16th day of February, 1864.

T. J. CRAICH, Under Sheriff.

THOMAS REIDY, Gaoler.

C. A. GALT, Under Gaoler.

THOMAS BLARE, Turnkey.

SAMUEL BRYAN, Constable.

WILLIAM WALLIS, ditto.

MAURICE ELLIS, Reporter, “Advertiser.”

G. STUART.

I, William Benson, of Hobart Town, in Tasmania, Esquire, being the Medical Officer of the prison at Hobart Town aforesaid, do hereby declare and certify that I have this day examined the body of Robert McKavor, lately convicted and sentenced to death at the Supreme Court, held at Hobart Town aforesaid; and I further certify that upon such examination I found that the body of the said Robert McKavor was dead.

Given under my hand at Hobart Town aforesaid, this
16th day of February, 1864.

W. BENSON, Medical Officer to Gaol.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

S. W. WESTBROOK.

NOTE (B), p 261.

THE concluding observations in the "Dialogue on Strikes," derive tenfold importance from the disclosures recently made by the "Commissioners" sent to Sheffield and Manchester to inquire into the operation of "Trades' Unions." Had these revelations been given before, it would have made many a friend of "Reform" pause before sanctioning so large a measure as has just been passed.

Still, it *is* now passed, and the object of the nation should be to guard against the evils of its abuse, by preparing the new voters rightly to use their privileges; and one great means must be to "reform" the Trades' Unions, which need it quite as much as Parliament ever did. It may be a difficult task to remedy the evils in question, but it must be done.

The instances of oppression arising out of the system of "strikes," referred to in the "Dialogue," sink into utter insignificance compared to the shameless and frightful atrocities now exposed by the Commission; yet they all, even the worst, naturally, though gradually, take their rise from the principles which strikes incidentally involve. A tyrannical majority is anxious to carry its object; if it cannot by fair and open means, it will be apt to do so by foul and secret means.

Everything, in such a case, is too often made to give way, (as in almost all associations, the basis of which is secrecy, whether the fanaticism which has led to them be political or religious,) to the great idol,—the supposed good of the

"Society" itself. A new code of morality is invented for it, which supersedes the Decalogue, and indeed all laws, divine or human. The objects of the association are to be obtained at whatever cost.

It is possible, indeed, to conceive a Strike, not only quite free from all violence, but even from the most oblique forms of unfair pressure. A simultaneous movement of a whole body of labourers may take place, under a universal or prevalent conviction—right or wrong—that they are not receiving their just wage. But certainly very few strikes have been of this character.—Similarly, there are, no doubt, legitimate objects of 'Trades' Unions; but it would appear, from the late revelations, that the legitimate objects of the Unions too often form the least momentous part of their business, and that they have been perverted to the vilest and most atrocious ends. As they must exist, (and, indeed, may be great blessings, if kept to their proper objects,) it is well that the attention of Parliament is to be immediately drawn to them, with a view to devise such regulations as may make them not only innocuous, but beneficial. It is not before the time. If an Englishman is to retain a vestige of his boasted freedom of any kind, whether of body, soul, or trade, this gigantic evil must be encountered with a bold hand. To speculate on the measures best adapted to cope with it, would be premature. But many will think that if 'Trades' Unions are to exist at all, they had better have a legal *status*, and a government inspection of accounts, with instant dissolution, and confiscation of funds, (in addition to the punishment of the guilty individuals,) should any such items of blood-money, or hire of assassins, be detected in them, as in some of the Sheffield Unions. They will also probably contend, that for "rattening," or any like attempt at coercing a fellow-workman, summary *corporal* punishment should be inflicted. It is a crime of treachery and violence, like garotting, and should be similarly punished. Crimes of which shamelessness and callousness are the characteristics, or which

are the result of an artificial code of morality, hardly admit of any other punishment, and its ignominy is a proper part of it. But the sharp pain is the true deterrent. Nor is there any reason why it should not be as effectual in these cases as in garotting, and other offences of a similar character.

Nor would such punishment imply any stigma on the respectable bodies among whom such culprits might be found, any more than the transportation of a few men convicted of forgery would disgrace the mercantile classes in general. It may be fairly presumed that the great body of our working-men would recoil with horror from the crimes recently proved against a few of their associates; and it is really as much to their interest that these few should be detected and punished, as it is that the mercantile classes should be purged of similar delinquents.

NOTE (C), p. 310.

A FRIEND—an official connected with one of the principal Railway Companies—remarked, after reading the essay on “Railway Accidents,” that it was easy to see that some of the suggestions could have come only from one who had not *practical* knowledge of the subject. I replied that it might well be so, but that my apology (as stated in the commencement of the essay), was, that, as “Railway Accidents” are still far too numerous, in spite of the wisdom of those who *are* practically acquainted with the subject, it was open to any one to make suggestions, even though they turned out ultimately of little value; and that though Railway officials might know many things the public did not, the public at all events was a pretty good judge of what was conducive to safety, convenience, and punctuality, and knew but too well when the arrangements of those who “are practically acquainted with the subject” have *not* secured them.

I cannot resist the temptation to add, considering the

present prostrate financial condition of some of our most hopeful Railway enterprises, and the havoc the Directors have made with the property of their shareholders, that ignorant as the public may be of Railway affairs, it is hardly possible for them to be more ignorant than the Directors themselves; that the chief difficulty of the supposed "unenlightened" shareholders is really to get at the depths of incapacity and ignorance on the part of those who are supposed to be "practically acquainted with the subject;" and that many of us who are shareholders would be only too glad to be somewhat less "enlightened" than we have been lately in the state-mysteries of Railway-dom.

As amongst the "dangers of the Rail," this, of being reduced to beggary through the flagitious mismanagement of Railway Directors, must now be accounted one of the most formidable, and scarcely preferable to a "Collision," it may justify the addition of a few words to the essay on "Railway Accidents;"—offered, however, like the suggestions in the essay itself, only because, in such extremities, any man is at liberty to make suggestions on the merest possibility that any of them may be useful.

It is to be feared that no effectual safeguard against the periodic recurrence of those same abuses from which the shareholding public are so fearfully suffering, can be provided, except by devising some method of giving to the shareholders themselves effectual control over the Directors. Nominally, indeed, the Directors are the creation of the constituency; but in reality they are an oligarchy. In fact, Railway Government is that worst kind of government which disguises the essence of despotism under the treacherous *semblance* of popular representation. On some great occasion, indeed, that is, when some signal catastrophe has occurred, and the shareholders, as lately, find their property half ruined, the urgency of the peril may constrain them to some spasmodic effort, and they may, in a fit of indignation, eject the whole body of Directors summarily; that is, they may exercise the

privilege of "shutting the stable door when the steed is stolen." But scarcely anything short of such a crisis can bring so widely dispersed a body to act together; and for regular and persistent action—which is the thing required, and which could alone operate as a sufficient check—it is out of the question. The present method is as laughably impracticable, as if our Government, instead of bringing its measures before the House of Commons, referred them to the entire electoral body of the empire—each individual being invited to vote, or send his proxy! The utter impossibility of doing this would as effectually throw the control of affairs into the hands of the Government as if our Government were a veritable oligarchy. This, though it may be deemed a ludicrous exaggeration of the condition of the unlucky shareholders, is in truth none at all; and in some respects falls short of the reality. Many a shareholder has investments in half a dozen railways, and is politely invited to attend as many meetings in all quarters of the compass, held at great distances from one another, sometimes, too, on the same day, and all at no very distant dates! If he votes by proxy, he too often gives a decision on matters on which he cannot form an intelligent judgment, and even if he goes, finds himself in nearly as great darkness. The few who, on such occasions, usually attend, can rarely make head against the compact phalanx of the Directors, and those whom they have pre-engaged to support them, or to negative the proposals, however questionable, which the Board recommends. How to secure the interest of the shareholders in such a case, and prevent the rash measures which have wrought such havoc with so many promising railway enterprises, is the problem: a problem which the "Railway Shareholders' Association" is occupied in working out.

To some, and to myself among the number, it seems that an *approximation* to the required check would be secured by a second chamber,—a small Committee of six or eight shareholders, to be elected in every Company,—whose sole function

should resemble a very principal function of the House of Commons—that of “withholding the supplies,” unless, for any proposed extension of capital, their consent, or that of a majority, (say of three-fourths,) could be obtained. These might be elected triennially, to allow of their becoming well acquainted with the financial affairs of the Company. Being chosen for this specific purpose, they might be expected to make themselves intimately acquainted with the questions on which their action would depend; being chosen also expressly for the protection of the pecuniary interests of the shareholders, they would be continually reminded of their duty to their constituents. No member of such committee ought to be chosen, who has not a certain large pecuniary stake in the company; this would be an additional guarantee of fidelity to his trust.

If it be asked, “*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*” it is answered, that the very constitution of this body would be, *in part*, a security; their express investiture with such a single function, to be exercised under the watchful and jealous eye of the constituents who have appointed them for no other end, would make it difficult at all events to hide from themselves their responsibility amidst that crowd of perplexing or enticing arguments by which the Directors are often lured on to ambitious extensions and rash enterprises. But this is not the whole, nor the chief advantage. It is admitted, of course, that there is a possibility of this Committee being cajoled or corrupted, as of the original Board’s being so. Even the House of Commons was once managed by Sir Robert Walpole in virtue of his favourite maxim that “every man had his price.” But it would be to forget the lessons of all experience, to suppose that this corruption does not become increasingly difficult when encountered by the “checks” and “counter-checks,” which will enter into every system of wise government. It is, in fact, the only efficient security against human weakness. No doubt, if we could but get a perfect man, or a body of perfect men, none but a fool would

wish to embarrass such an executive by any needless complexity of function. Everybody in his senses would prefer a despotism administered by an archangel to a system which was compelled to guard against defective wisdom and still more pernicious selfishness by checks and counter-checks. But, as such a despotism is not to be had, the only and generally effectual resource of human wisdom is to set one man or body of men as a watch upon another. Nor is it to be forgotten that often in these different bodies—constituted for the very purpose of watching each other—an *esprit du corps* naturally arises, which is proof against all ordinary corruption from rival or antagonistic bodies. And for this reason we are led to think that such a committee as now supposed, would soon guard its peculiar functions with the same jealousy as the House of Commons guards its privilege of granting or withholding the supplies.

Some to whom such an expedient seems insufficient or inexpedient, think that a government official (it might perhaps be wise to combine *both* these checks, and to have a government official as chairman of such a financial committee) should be appointed, without whose approval no new extension, and no fresh issue of capital, should take place. At any rate, such a government officer would constitute a considerable guarantee. Such a man would have a public character to maintain; he would be without immediate interest in the issue; and both these circumstances are of great weight. Time was, when it was supposed that the vices inherent in government officials, the love of “red-tapism” and routine, made them the worst possible administrators of any scheme, and that it was infinitely better to trust to the energy and enterprise of those immediately *interested*. And this would be most true, if this strong interest were always under the guidance of prudence, integrity, and honesty. But experience has shown, that in many cases, in spite of the vices and faults of government agency, it is better to trust to the impartiality of such agency, with all its drawbacks of tardi-

ness and over-caution, than to the unchecked selfishness or commercial fraud or cupidity. Thus we find, for example, that a government inspector of emigrant ships will often set on shore passengers, whom the reckless rapacity of a shipowner would consign to all the horrors of famine or shipwreck !

An effectual method of providing a uniform and persistent check to the reckless spirit of railway oligarchies, must be discovered somehow ; else when money is plentiful, and the spirit of speculation rife, we shall have a periodical repetition of those shameless follies or corruptions which have this year crippled the income of so many thousands, and which will again and again consign the savings by which thrift strives to provide for widows and orphans, to the cormorants in the shape of hungry projectors, lawyers, and engineers, who hang about their patrons, (too often interested patrons,) the Railway Boards. Unless such measures be taken, one of the most splendid properties in the world will be ruined. A smash on the rail is bad, no doubt ; that which occurs in the finances of a company, though it may not make so much noise, is no less dreadful, and inflicts far wider and more permanent misery.

The shareholders of Railways are certainly entitled in strictest equity to every protection which Government can give, considering the exceptional nature of their property. The conditions and restrictions which its quasi-national character leads Parliament to impose, are very onerous ; and, as recent legal decisions teach us, people have been lured into investing capital in it with a very imperfect lien over it, compared with what they would have over any other.

Unless these disadvantages can be counterbalanced by some *quid pro quo*, in the shape of security, it will be increasingly difficult to induce people freely to invest in this species of property.





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